THE BIBLE OF BOXING

The RING

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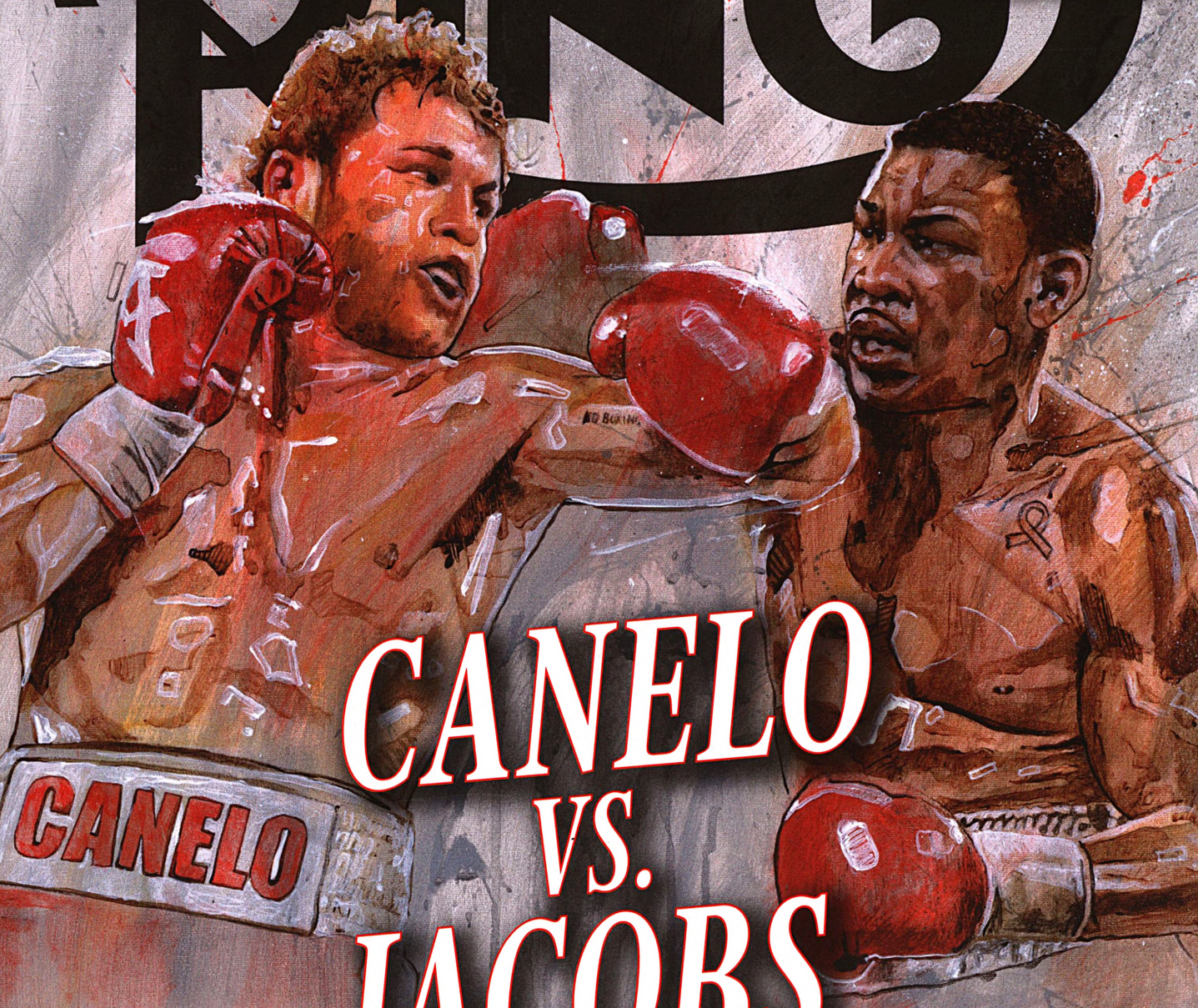
GUEST EDITOR



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12 FORMER CHAMPS BREAK DOWN THE MIDDLEWEIGHT TITLE UNIFICATION

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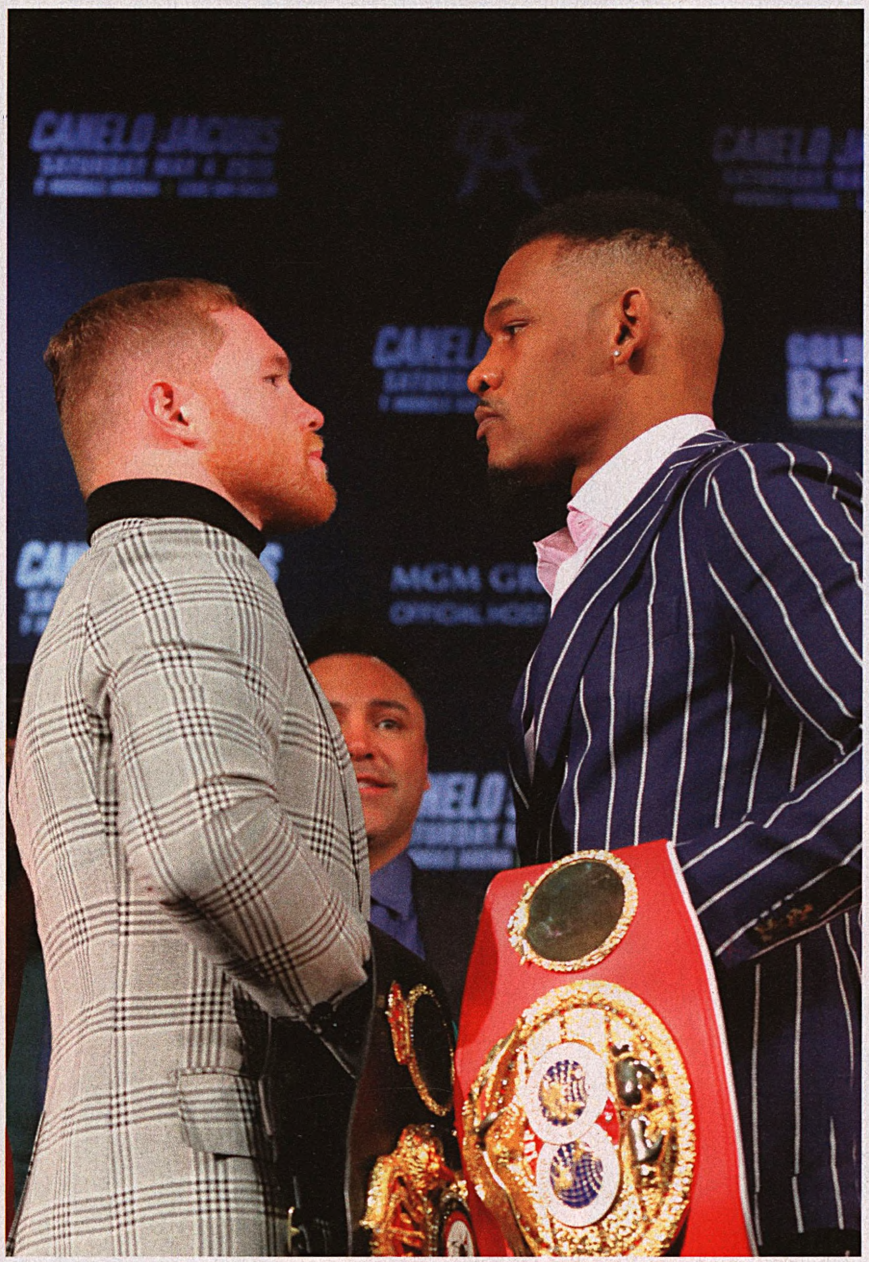

★★★

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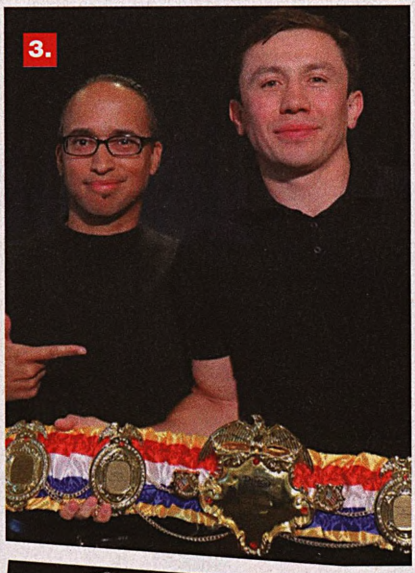
Canelo vs. Jacobs is one of the biggest events of 2019 and one of the best matchups that can be made in boxing.

COVER PAINTING BY RICHARD T. SLONE

Tevin Farmer (right) had to utilize all of his ring savvy and fighting heart in his hometown of Philadelphia to turn back the spirited challenge of unbeaten Irishman Jono Carroll on March 15. The day after his IBF junior lightweight title defense, Farmer kept his pre-fight promise and treated Carroll to a Philly cheesesteak sandwich.

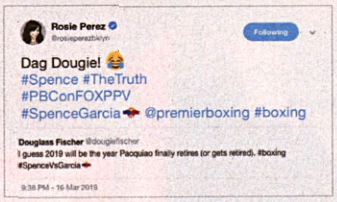
PHOTO BY STEPHEN MCCARTHY

YEAR OF THE CHAMPS



Ring Magazine champions crowned in 2018:
1. Cecilia Braekhus (Women's pound-for-pound champ) **2.** Srisaket Sor Rungvisai (junior bantamweight champ) with Doug Fischer **3.** Gennady Golovkin (pound-for-pound champ) with Fischer **4.** Vasiliy Lomachenko (lightweight champ) **5.** Hiroto Kyoguchi (junior flyweight champ) with Nick Skok **6.** Aleksandr Usyk (cruiserweight champ) and Callum Smith (super middleweight champ) with Eddie Hearn **7.** Canelo Alvarez (middleweight/ pound-for-pound champ)

TWEET OF THE MONTH



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Pictured left to right: Damon Allen Jr., Jessie Vargas, Fernando Vargas

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VOLUME 98, NO. 6 / JUNE 2019

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SEND EDITORIAL COMMENTS TO:
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THE RING (ISSN: 0035-5410), Vol. 98, NO. 6 (JUNE 2019), is published 12 times per year by Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC, P.O. Box 90254 Brooklyn, NY 11209. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11209 and additional post offices. Postmasters: Send change of address notices to: THE RING, P.O. Box 433122, Palm Coast, FL 32164-3122. Single copy price $6.95 in U.S.A. and Canada (£4.95 in the U.K.). Subscription price U.S. And possession $39.99 for 12 issues including Canada, Mexico add $5. All remaining countries add $10 for 12 issues per year. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage. The entire contents of this magazine are copyright ©2019 Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. Publisher is not responsible for the accuracy of the content of advertisements appearing in this magazine, nor the delivery or quality of merchandise or services offered. No endorsement of any such advertisement is intended or implied. Advertisers and agencies assume liability for claims arising from the content of their advertisements. FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND RATES: advertising@sepublications.com. U.S. / Canadian and International distribution by Comag Marketing Group Llc, 155 Village Blvd #200, Princeton, Nj 08540. UK distribution by Seymour Distribution Ltd., 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, England, EC1A 9PT. Printed In U.S.A

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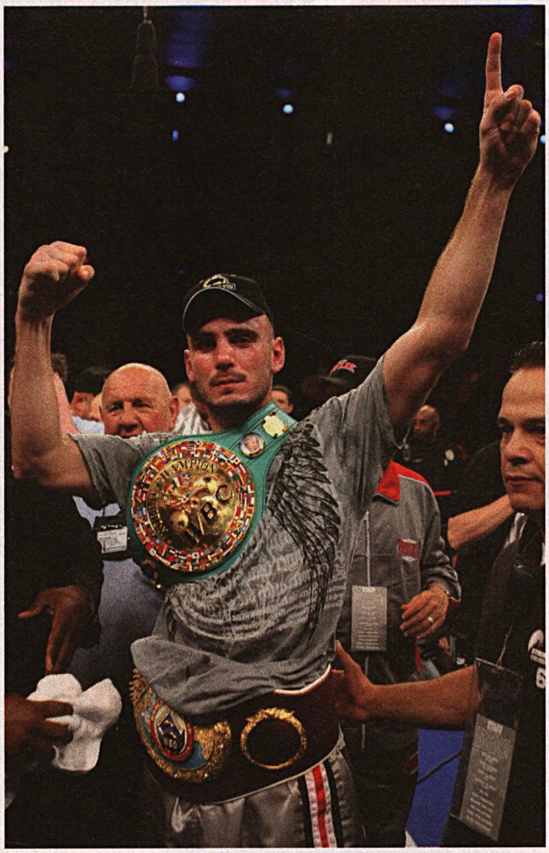
RINGSIDE BY KELLY PAVLIK

THERE CAN (AND SHOULD) BE ONLY ONE CHAMP



Kelly Pavlik, who held Ring, WBC and WBO middleweight titles, was viewed as the one, true champ.

The question was brought up recently on my podcast: Am I the last true middleweight champion from America? It's a hell of a question. There have been a few Americans to hold world titles since I was champ – Daniel Jacobs and Peter Quillin come to mind. Jacobs stands out because of his obvious talent and because he beat Quillin and had a good, close fight with Gennady Golovkin, but he held versions of the title. He had the WBA's "regular" belt, and now he's got the IBF title, but that doesn't necessarily make you "the champ" in the eyes of the public. If Jacobs beats Canelo Alvarez on May 4, he'll be viewed as the champ.

I feel like I was viewed as the real middleweight champ because I beat an undisputed champ in Jermain Taylor and then reigned for three years. I didn't have all the belts, thanks to boxing politics, but – like Canelo is now – I was the Ring Magazine and lineal champion.

If there's one regret I have looking back, it's that I didn't push harder to grab all four titles. Taylor won all four (IBF, WBA, WBC and WBO) when he beat Bernard Hopkins in 2005, but by the time he faced me in 2007, he only held the WBC and WBO belts. I was OK with winning just those two, because I was the man who beat the man who beat Hopkins, who was undisputed. But I did want those other belts. I wanted those fights with Felix Sturm, who held the WBA title, and with Arthur Abraham, who held the IBF title. My promoter, Top Rank, didn't think it was that important. They knew I wanted the titles and seriously looked into making those fights, but when the negotiations came down, Sturm's and Abraham's promoters wanted me to go to Europe. Top Rank and my manager, Cameron Dunkin, who taught me a lot about the business, thought it was a bad idea for me to go over there.

I didn't argue with them. They knew more than I did at that point. My job was training and fighting, which is why I was willing to go up two weight classes to fight Hopkins. We had to take a meaningful fight,

Pavlik digs a left to the body of Jermain Taylor during their hotly contested rematch on February 16, 2008, in Las Vegas. Pavlik won by unanimous decision and calls it one of his most satisfying victories.

AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

because I was coming off an easy title defense against Gary Lockett. Fighting Lockett was OK, because in my previous three fights I took on Edison Miranda and then Taylor twice. The loss to Hopkins was hard to swallow, but it was not the best version of me. It was just a bad, horrible night. I had a 101-degree temperature the night of that fight, and this was documented by Thomas Hauser.

I wasn't dropped or beat up, but my reputation took a hit – and that's too bad, because I feel like I should have been appreciated more even before I beat Taylor. I was a hot prospect early in my career and I fought some tough guys as a young contender – guys like Fulgencio Zuniga, Jose Luis Zertuche and Bronco McKart – that other contenders avoided. But my first HBO fight didn't come until seven years into my pro career, which sounds crazy, but the HBO boss at the time (Ross Greenburg) didn't believe I was the goods. He pretty much came out and said, "We don't invest in fighters from the Midwest," which was code for "white guys," really, and that's just wrong. That's a regional bias and boxing ignorance. Talent is talent.

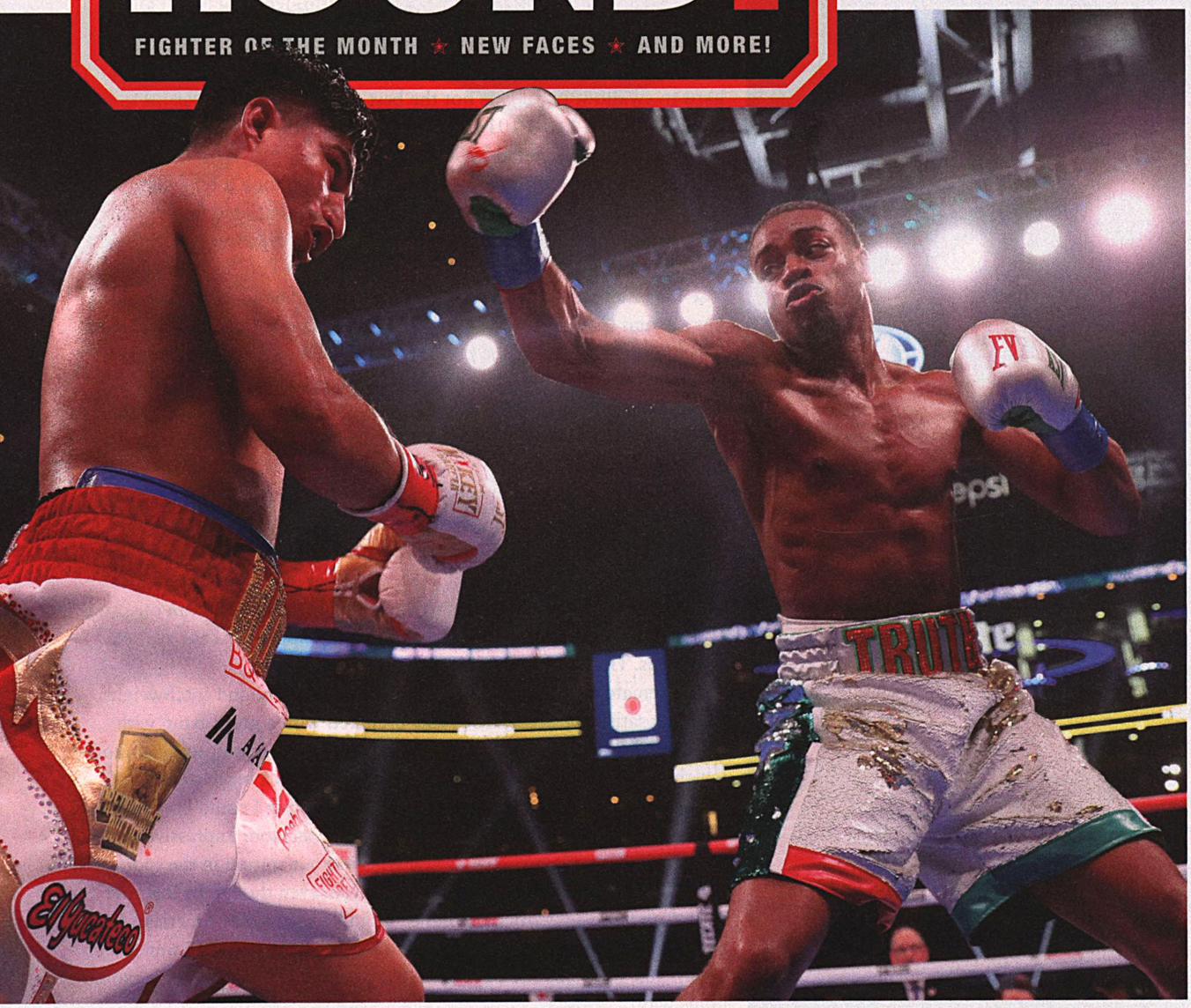
I should have proved my worth to HBO with the Miranda fight. He was a monster at the time. Everybody was afraid of Miranda. HBO blew him up before the fight; they even produced a pre-fight feature on him. All the talk was on this Colombian KO artist during fight week media events. I told everyone that I was going to back him up and knock him out, and everyone thought I was crazy. But that's what happened. That opened some eyes. That's one of my most satisfying victories.

The rematch with Taylor, which we did at a 164-pound catchweight, was also satisfying because he came prepared with a great camp with Emanuel Steward. Taylor fought a smarter fight; he was in survival mode, which made him box phenomenally well. That was a bigger win for me than the first fight because nobody expected that I could beat him without knocking him out. Outpointing him was more impressive to me.

Doing what's not expected of you adds to your stature in the sport. Jacobs has done this before against Golovkin, even though he lost that fight. Can he be that guy, an American middleweight that American fans and the rest of the boxing world look up to as THE champ? I think he's always had that potential, but there is a potentially great fighter standing in his way.

Do I think Jacobs has a shot at beating Canelo? I do and I don't. Canelo's got the momentum on his side now. He's hot. He can't be touched. But on the flip side, Jacobs is a big middleweight, between 5-foot-11 and 6-foot-1, like me and the big, solid guys of my era – Taylor and Miranda. Jacobs is one of those guys, and he's talented. He's shown brilliance in his fights for his size, but there's something I can't put my finger on with Jacobs. He takes breaks; he goes into a mental lull where he doesn't fight, even in the GGG fight. He was being dominated until he was dropped, then he turned it around. In the handful of fights after GGG, he showed flashes of being the top middleweight in the world. But it could be a long night for Jacobs on May 4. Canelo is on the move. I don't see any other middleweight beating him right now. He's that good.

Kelly Pavlik is the former Ring Magazine, lineal, WBC and WBO middleweight champion. Since retiring from boxing in 2012, he has opened a Mi Gym Fitness Center in Columbiana, Ohio, near his hometown of Youngstown, and is the co-host (along with James Dominguez) of The Punchline, a boxing podcast.

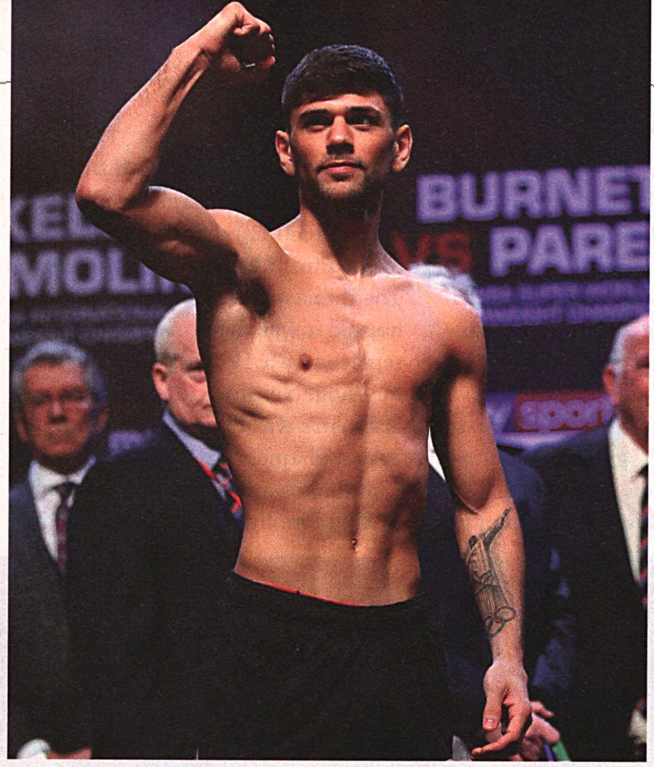


TOM PENNINGTON

ERROL SPENCE JR.

Spence outsized and outclassed Garcia, leaving no more doubts about the level of his boxing ability and skillset.

Taller, rangier, stronger, naturally bigger. Those were the paramount reasons put forward by experts as to why IBF welterweight titleholder Errol Spence Jr. would triumph against four-division ruler Mikey Garcia at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, on March 16. The experts were wrong – Spence prevailed because he was better. Making the third defense of the belt he won from Kell Brook on May 27, 2017, in Sheffield, England, Spence scored a 12-round unanimous decision shutout with tallies of 120-107, 120-108 and 120-108. Garcia may have been smaller, but he was dominated to such a degree that a hotly anticipated pay-per-view prizefight turned into an exhibition of the southpaw's formidable skillset. Spence, now 29, has been highly touted from the moment he turned professional; a decorated amateur standout, the quick-fisted Texan looked to have all the tools necessary to become a major star. And he's now well on his way. This performance was so perfect that Spence has further justified his standing as the No. 1 welterweight on the planet, and he is now a top-five pound-for-pound entrant. Hopefully, for the sake of fight fans around the world, network and promotional issues can be ironed out so that "The Truth" can prove his superiority against rival titleholders Terence Crawford, Keith Thurman and Shawn Porter. RING



Cordina's amateur experience, plus quality sparring at home and in the U.S., has helped him quickly advance in the pro ranks.

NEW FACES

JOE CORDINA

By **Anson Wainwright**

During his formative years in Wales, Joe Cordina was an avid rugby and soccer player; he excelled in both sports and hoped to forge a career in either. However, when he was 16, he went to the boxing gym in the off-season to stay fit, and things changed.

"I didn't go into the boxing gym wanting to fight," Cordina told The Ring. "They were asking my dad if I wanted to fight, and he said, 'Go on, have one (fight).' And I'm one of them if my dad says, 'Go and do that,' I go and do it. I didn't wanna show that I've not got any (guts).

"I got invited to try out for the Welsh squad and got on the team after three or four fights and was there pretty much every weekend for the next year-and-a-half, two years and had a trial for the (Great Britain) squad after two years. Everything came pretty quick."

Cordina is regarded as one of the most successful Welsh amateur boxers of all time. He won bronze at the 2014 Commonwealth Games and gold at the European Championships a year later. He competed in three World Championships (his best result was reaching the quarterfinals in the 2015 tournament) and represented his country on the grandest stage of all, the 2016 Olympics, reaching the round of 16. He also fought four times in the semi-professional World Series of Boxing, going 2-2.

"It's helped me come into the pros," the 27-year-old lightweight said. "They have pushed me along quick, and going to the Olympics and all these different styles and boxing in the (World Series of Boxing) has helped me to adapt to the pro game a lot quicker."

After deciding to turn professional, Cordina switched his training base from Wales to Essex, England, under the excellent supervision of Tony Sims, though he returns home when he can to visit his family.

"You sometimes have to sacrifice if you want to make yourself them little percentages better, which I'm willing to do," he explained. "I missed a lot of my first daughter's early days, and it was all sacrifice to be where I am now and to give them a better life.

"I'm not even a fraction of the finished article. I've got a lot of work to do and a lot of work to get to where I want to be. This is all the sacrifice to get me there."

Since making the switch to the professional ranks, Cordina has twice visited America – once to Miami for 10 days and the second time to Los Angeles for two weeks. During that time, he sparred at the Wild Card Boxing Club and Robert Garcia's gym against fellow prospects Erick De Leon, George Kambosos Jr., Hector Tanajara Jr. and Hiroki Okada, as well as former world title challenger Michael Farenas.

Cordina has also enjoyed high-class sparring with former three-division titleholder Jorge Linares and Matchroom stablemate Ricky Burns.

Cordina (8-0, 6 knockouts) won his first four outings in England before fighting in Wales on a pair of Anthony Joshua undercards in front of 70,000 fans. The experiences whetted his appetite for future success.

"It was pretty surreal," he said. "The first time, it was a bit of a dampener on the whole occasion because everything was rushed. I was the swing bout. As the night was going on, my gap was getting narrower; I'm starting to panic. I took my gloves off, and then I got a call to get my gloves on. I'm panicking, getting my gloves on and running to the ring. Dillian Whyte had just fought Robert Helenius and it was time for me to go on. Whyte jumped out of the ring and I jumped in the ring.

"The second time was a bit more special. I won my first title in my hometown in the Principality Stadium in front of probably three-quarters full. It was an unbelievable experience."

"The Welsh Wizard" added the Commonwealth title with a dominant points win over the durable Sean Dodd in front of his home fans last August. He had been set to defend his title in November, but a hand injury curtailed those aspirations. At press time, he was tentatively scheduled to return on April 20 against Andy Townend (22-4, 14 KOs) for the vacant British championship.

However, as bright as his future in the ring looks, part of Cordina's heart still lives on the soccer field; he has been an ardent supporter of Cardiff City since childhood and wears the club's badge on his shorts. But now he envisions a way for all of his dreams to unite:

"Hopefully one day I can headline and fight for a world title in the Cardiff City stadium." RING

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

BOXING'S GOLDEN ERA AND ITS MOST FAMOUS GYM

Stillman's Gym, located on Eighth Avenue in Manhattan between 54th and 55th Streets, opened in 1921 and closed in 1961. The three-story structure that housed it was then torn down and replaced by a 19-story apartment building. No physical reminder that Stillman's was there exists today, not even a plaque.

Stillman's was assured a place in boxing lore by virtue of an essay

THE STANLEY WESTON ARCHIVE

Former welterweight champ Kid Gavilan (standing third from right) and a group of fellow boxers pose for a portrait in Stillman's Gym, circa 1955.

entitled "The University of Eighth Avenue" that A.J. Liebling wrote for The New Yorker in 1955. Since then, many writers have sought to follow in Liebling's footsteps and add their vision of Stillman's to the historical record. One of the better efforts is an essay by historian Mike Silver entitled "Boxing in Olde New York," which appears in *New York Sports* (edited by Stephen H. Norwood, University of Arkansas Press).

Liebling used Stillman's Gym as the starting point for an essay that wove in the history of boxing that ended with his oft-quoted observation, "The Sweet Science is joined onto the past like a man's arm to his shoulder."

Silver, by contrast, focuses on the scene at Stillman's in the late 1950s, recreating it in painstaking detail and introducing readers to some of the gym's more fascinating characters, including its owner. Asked in 1967 about his perpetually dour expression, 82-year-old Lou Stillman replied, "How long do you think a man with a happy face would have lasted running a boxing gym? Everybody called me a grouch, a crab, a cranky guy who never smiled. Well, that's what scared off the chiselers, moochers and deadbeats."

"If boxing had a voice," Silver concludes, "it would be the sound of Stillman's on a busy afternoon. But don't bother trying to find anything like it today, because you will search in vain. The unique confluence of circumstances that created and nurtured Stillman's Gym from the 1920s to the 1950s – a veritable golden age for the sport – no longer exists."

★★★

The greatest officiating controversy in the history of the National Football League erupted in the NFC Championship Game earlier this year when Gary Cavaletto and Todd Prukop (two on-field officials with an apparently clear view of Los Angeles Rams cornerback Nickell Robey-Coleman's illegal hit on New Orleans Saints receiver Tommylee Lewis) failed to call pass interference. The non-call cost the Saints an almost-certain trip to the Super Bowl and has been widely condemned as one of the worst blunders in the history of sports officiating.

The men and women who officiate sports events carry a heavy responsibility. And mistakes are magnified by the circumstances of the moment. Baseball umpires erroneously called runners safe at first base for a hundred years without significant consequences. Then, on June 2, 2010, first base umpire Jim Joyce (one of the best in the game) blew a seemingly easy call and cost Detroit Tigers pitcher Armando Galarraga a perfect game.

But let's keep things in perspective. Yes, these calls were important and had significant repercussions. But compare them to the burden that a referee in boxing carries. In the sweet science, the failure to make the right call and end a fight can cost a fighter his life.

★★★

A word of remembrance in honor of Hugh McIlvanney, who died on January 24 at age 84.

When I began researching *The Black Lights* (my initial foray into serious boxing writing) in 1983, I was told that there were two books I should read. One was *The Sweet Science* by A.J. Liebling. The other was *McIlvanney on Boxing*.

In later years, I spent time with McIlvanney on several occasions, the most memorable of which came in 2001 when he took me to lunch at the Garrick Club in London. The club was founded in 1831 for the purpose of bringing patrons and practitioners of theatrical arts together so that actors and others in theater might meet with men of education and wealth. A portrait of Charles Dickens (who was a guest at the club as a young man and later an esteemed member) was prominently displayed. During that trip to London, the seed for a novel I later wrote – *The Final Recollections of Charles Dickens* – was planted in my mind.

McIlvanney excelled as a boxing writer, sportswriter and general news writer (the latter being his beat when he joined the staff of The Scotsman six decades ago). But these labels don't do him justice. He was a remarkable wordsmith and one of the best ever at his craft. Boxing is fortunate to have had him.

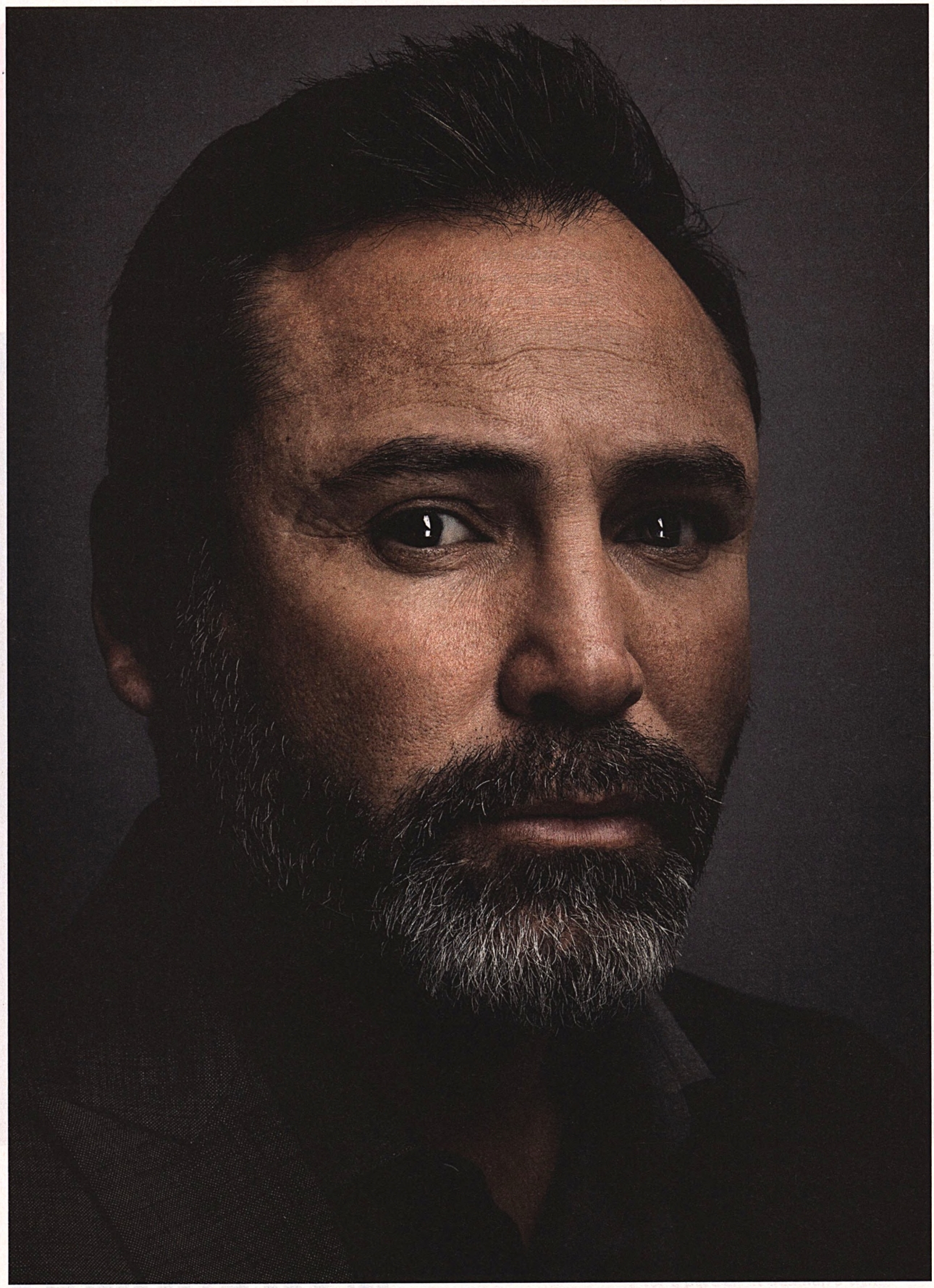
★★★

Recently, I was listening to a tape of an interview I conducted with Mickey Mantle in 1989 when I was researching *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times*. Most of what Mantle had to say that afternoon is incorporated in that Ali biography and a collection of articles published under the title *Thomas Hauser on Sports*. But there was one exchange I'd forgotten that bears repeating now.

Toward the end of the interview, I asked Mantle if he'd ever been in a fight – not an organized amateur fight, but a playground or street encounter – and whether he thought he'd had the tools to be a boxer.

"Through the years, I've had maybe three or four fights," Mantle answered. "What do you call it if you can't take a punch, a glass jaw? I might have had a glass jaw for all I know. Fortunately, nobody ever hit me in the head." RING

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – Protect Yourself at All Times – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.



OSCAR DE LA HOYA

THE FACE OF BOXING

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WOJTEK URBANEK

TEXT BY THOMAS HAUSER

On occasion, an exciting new talent comes on the boxing scene. Most often, it's a young fighter who captures the imagination. But at the other end of the spectrum, someone has to convey the essence of boxing to the public. That's where writers and photographers come in.

Wojtek Urbanek was born in Poland in 1975. He came to the United States in 2012 and is now global creative director for Springer Nature, which publishes Nature, Scientific American and several other prestigious magazines. He's also a brilliant portrait photographer.

"When I photograph," Urbanek says, "I'm very aware that there's a human being in front of my camera. I seek out a human connection with that person. A truth about that person; not the whole truth but part of who they are."

Recently, Urbanek turned his attention to boxing. In most instances, he has only a few minutes to work with his subject. Oscar De La Hoya and Dmitry Bivol were photographed before and after press conferences at Madison Square Garden. Jarrell Miller was in the crowd at a fight card at Kings Theatre in Brooklyn.

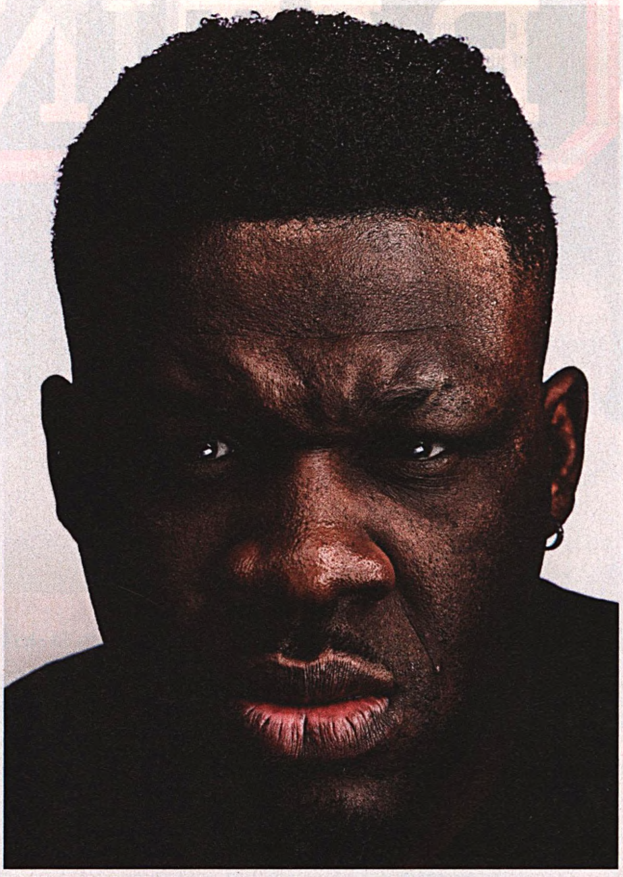
Boxing fans are used to seeing a smiling, genial De La Hoya. Wojtek's photograph captures the fighter in him. "In the three minutes I had Oscar in front of my camera," Wojtek says, "I saw so many different sides to him. He's a very complex person."

Look into Jarrell Miller's eyes and think for a moment what it would be like to stand opposite this glowering 300-pound behemoth in the ring. "I felt an energy inside of him," Urbanek recalls. "Part of me wanted to step aside, that it was dangerous to stand in his way."

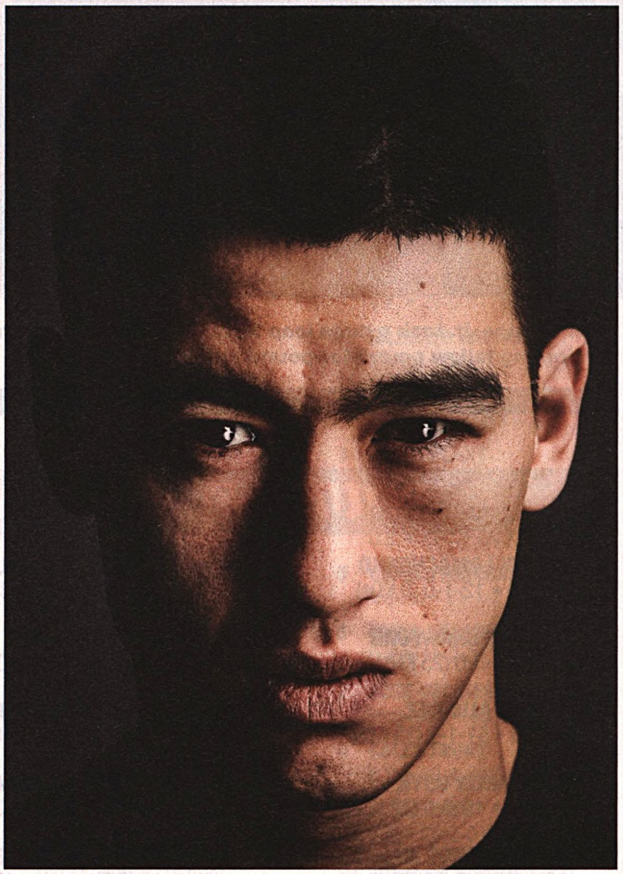
Contemplate the intensity in Dmitry Bivol's visage. "There was a mysticism about him." Wojtek remembers. "I saw the past and the future in his face."

All of these portraits have one thing in common. In this moment, there is no play in the faces. The history of human combat is in their eyes.

Wojtek Urbanek is based in New York and can be reached at studio@wojtekurbanek.com. Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com.



JARRELL MILLER



DMITRY BIVOL

RATINGS

POUND FOR POUND ★ RATINGS ANALYSIS ★ THE RING RATINGS

Errol Spence Jr. took a huge leap forward in the mythical rankings after dominating fellow pound-for-pound entrant Mikey Garcia.

POUND FOR POUND

1 **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 12-1-0 (9 KOs)

2 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 34-0-0 (25 KOs)

3 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 51-1-2 (35 KOs)

4 **ALEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)

5 **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
U.S. • 25-0-0 (21 KOs)

6 **GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
Kazakhstan • 38-1-1 (34 KOs)

7 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 17-0-0 (15 KOs)

8 **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
Thailand • 47-4-1 (41 KOs)

9 **MIKEY GARCIA**
U.S. • 39-1-0 (30 KOs)

10 **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines • 42-1-5 (23 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND: Mikey Garcia (No. 7 last month) took an admirable shot at the moon, but the uber-skilled Errol Spence Jr. (No. 10 at the time) was well beyond his reach. After sweeping the scorecards, Spence rose to No. 5 while Garcia slipped to No. 9.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No change.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Joe Smith Jr. (No. 9 last month) got a whiff of an upset with a big punch in Round 10 but otherwise was outclassed by No. 3-rated Dmitry Bivol, who won a wide decision. Smith fell off the list and British knockout aficionado Anthony Yarde entered at No. 10.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Anthony Dirrell (No. 6 last month) bonked heads with Avni Yildirim (unrated) during their scheduled 12-rounder, which was stopped after 10 due to the rapidly worsening cut, but the American was ahead on the cards and was awarded the split technical decision; he rose to No. 4. A faded James DeGale (No. 5 last month) hit the canvas twice on his way to losing a unanimous decision to Chris Eubank Jr., who advanced from No. 8 to No. 6 on the strength of his performance. DeGale, clearly no longer the Olympic gold medalist-turned-titleholder who had created so much buzz in years past, announced his retirement soon after the loss. With him out, a vacancy at No. 10 was filled by 40-year-old sentinel Juergen Braehmer.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Erislandy Lara and Brian Castano battled to a fair draw, so the gap between them on the list was erased – Lara went from from No. 2 to No. 3 and Castano from No. 6 to No. 4.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Not everyone agreed with the cries of "robbery" after Shawn Porter (No. 4) won a split decision over Yordenis Ugas

Heavyweight contender Luis Ortiz attacks tougher-than-expected Christian Hammer en route to a 10-round decision victory.

(No. 8 last month), but everyone agreed that Ugas deserved a lot of credit, so he was raised to No. 7.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No change.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Lee Selby (No. 7 last month) pole vaulted to lightweight, so he was removed, and undefeated Brit Kid Galahad, who is slated to face current No. 2 Josh Warrington in June, came in at No. 10.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No change.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Luis Nery, now three fights removed from being stripped and suspended for drug and weight violations, rose from No. 6 to No. 4 after introducing McJoe Arroyo (unrated) to the canvas four times en route to a fourth-round stoppage.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: McWilliams Arroyo vacated the No. 9 spot, dropping down to flyweight and picking up a unanimous decision over Carlos Maldonado (unrated). That left No. 10 empty for young (and apparently cursed) Mexican Alejandro Barrios, whose draw percentage is almost as high as his KO rate at 17-2-5 (8 KOs).

FLYWEIGHTS: Arroyo dropped in at No. 9, which pushed No. 10-rated Junto Nakatani off the list. Ryoichi Taguchi moved up from 108 looking for a shot at Kosei Tanaka's belt and got it – though he didn't get IT. Tanaka retained his strap by unanimous decision in an entertaining battle and rose from No. 2 to No. 1 while Taguchi squeaked in at No. 10.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Taguchi left his No. 3 rank to move up, and countryman Tetsuya Hisada entered at No. 10.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Vic Saludar continued to impress, defending the title he took from Ryuya Yamanaka with a unanimous decision over Masataka Taniguchi, whose three losses have all been at the hands of Ring-rated fighters. Saludar climbed from No. 4 to No. 3 as a result.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C (VACANT)

1 ANTHONY JOSHUA
U.K. • 22-0-0 (21 KOs)

2 TYSON FURY
U.K. • 27-0-1 (19 KOs)

3 DEONTAY WILDER
U.S. • 40-0-1 (39 KOs)

4 DILLIAN WHYTE
U.K. • 25-1-0 (18 KOs)

5 LUIS ORTIZ
Cuba • 31-1-0 (26 KOs)

6 ALEXANDER POVETKIN
Russia • 34-2-0 (24 KOs)

7 JOSEPH PARKER
New Zealand • 25-2-0 (19 KOs)

8 ADAM KOWNACKI
U.S. • 19-0-0 (15 KOs)

9 JARRELL MILLER
U.S. • 23-0-1 (20 KOs)

10 KUBRAT PULEV
Bulgaria • 26-1-0 (13 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C ALEKSANDR USYK
Ukraine • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)

1 MAIRIS BRIEDIS
Latvia • 25-1-0 (18 KOs)

2 MURAT GASSIEV
Russia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)

3 YUNIER DORTICOS
Cuba • 23-1-0 (21 KOs)

4 KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI
Poland • 31-1-0 (19 KOs)

5 DENIS LEBEDEV
Russia • 32-2-0 (23 KOs)

6 ANDREW TABITI
U.S. • 17-0-0 (13 KOs)

7 MAKSIM VLASOV
Russia • 42-3-0 (25 KOs)

8 KEVIN LERENA
S. Africa • 22-1-0 (10 KOs)

9 ILUNGA MAKABU
Congo • 24-2-0 (23 KOs)

10 ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN
France • 24-0-0 (16 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK
Ukraine • 16-0-0 (13 KOs)

2 SERGEY KOVALEV
Russia • 33-3-1 (28 KOs)

3 DMITRY BIVOL
Russia • 16-0-0 (11 KOs)

4 MARCUS BROWNE
U.S. • 23-0-0 (16 KOs)

5 ELEIDER ALVAREZ
Colombia • 24-1-0 (12 KOs)

6 ARTUR BETERBIEV
Russia • 13-0-0 (13 KOs)

7 BADOU JACK
Sweden • 22-2-3 (13 KOs)

8 SULLIVAN BARRERA
Cuba • 22-2-0 (14 KOs)

9 SVEN FORNLING
Sweden • 15-1-0 (7 KOs)

10 ANTHONY YARDE
U.S. • 18-0-0 (17 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C CALLUM SMITH
U.K. • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)

1 GILBERTO RAMIREZ
Mexico • 39-0-0 (25 KOs)

2 DAVID BENAVIDEZ
U.S. • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)

3 CALEB PLANT
U.S. • 18-0-0 (10 KOs)

4 ANTHONY DIRRELL
U.S. • 33-1-1 (24 KOs)

5 CANELO ALVAREZ
Mexico • 51-1-2 (35 KOs)

6 CHRIS EUBANK JR.
U.K. • 28-2-0 (21 KOs)

7 JOSE UZCATEGUI
Venezuela • 28-3-0 (23 KOs)

8 CALEB TRUAX
U.S. • 30-4-2 (19 KOs)

9 JESSE HART
U.S. • 25-2-0 (21 KOs)

10 JUERGEN BRAEHMER
Germany • 50-3-0 (36 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of March 16, 2019

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

C CANELO ALVAREZ
Mexico • 51-1-2 (35 KOs)

1 GENNADY GOLOVKIN
Kaz. • 38-1-1 (34 KOs)

2 DANIEL JACOBS
U.S. • 35-2-0 (29 KOs)

3 BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
U.K. • 27-0-0 (13 KOs)

4 ROB BRANT
U.S. • 25-1-0 (17 KOs)

5 DEMETRIUS ANDRADE
U.S. • 27-0-0 (17 KOs)

6 JERMALL CHARLO
U.S. • 28-0-0 (21 KOs)

7 SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO
Ukraine • 12-1-0 (10 KOs)

8 DAVID LEMIEUX
Canada • 40-4-0 (34 KOs)

9 MACIEJ SULECKI
Poland • 28-1-0 (11 KOs)

10 HASSAN N'DAM
France • 37-3-0 (21 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 JARRETT HURD
U.S. • 23-0-0 (16 KOs)

2 JAIME MUNGUIA
Mexico • 32-0-0 (26 KOs)

3 ERISLANDY LARA
Cuba • 25-3-3 (14 KOs)

4 BRIAN CASTANO
Argentina • 15-0-1 (11 KOs)

5 TONY HARRISON
U.S. • 28-2-0 (21 KOs)

6 JERMELL CHARLO
U.S. • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)

7 MICHEL SORO
France • 33-2-1 (22 KOs)

8 JULIAN WILLIAMS
U.S. • 26-1-1 (16 KOs)

9 KELL BROOK
U.K. • 38-2-0 (26 KOs)

10 ERICKSON LUBIN
U.S. • 20-1-0 (15 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 ERROL SPENCE
U.S. • 25-0-0 (21 KOs)

2 TERENCE CRAWFORD
U.S. • 34-0-0 (25 KOs)

3 KEITH THURMAN
U.S. • 29-0-0 (22 KOs)

4 SHAWN PORTER
U.S. • 30-2-1 (17 KOs)

5 MANNY PACQUIAO
Phil. • 61-7-2 (39 KOs)

6 DANNY GARCIA
U.S. • 34-2-0 (20 KOs)

7 YORDENIS UGAS
Cuba • 23-4-0 (11 KOs)

8 EGIDIJUS KAVALIAUSKAS
Lithuania • 21-0-0 (17 KOs)

9 JEFF HORN
Australia • 19-1-1 (13 KOs)

10 JESSIE VARGAS
U.S. • 28-2-2 (10 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 REGIS PROGRAIS
U.S. • 23-0-0 (19 KOs)

2 JOSH TAYLOR
U.K. • 14-0-0 (12 KOs)

3 JOSE RAMIREZ
U.S. • 24-0-0 (16 KOs)

4 KIRYL RELIKH
Belarus • 23-2-0 (19 KOs)

5 MAURICE HOOKER
U.S. • 26-0-3 (17 KOs)

6 IVAN BARANCHYK
Russia • 19-0-0 (12 KOs)

7 VIKTOR POSTOL
Ukraine • 30-2-0 (12 KOs)

8 SERGEY LIPINETS
Russia • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

9 EDUARD TROYANOVSKY
Russia • 27-2-0 (24 KOs)

10 JOSE ZEPEDA
U.S. • 30-2-0 (25 KOs)

Brian Castano advanced to No. 4 in the junior middleweight rankings by holding respected veteran Erislandy Lara to a draw.

Maciej Sulecki traded knockdowns with Gabriel Rosado en route to a decision that held his No. 9 ranking at middleweight.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

C VASILIY LOMACHENKO
Ukraine • 12-1-0 (9 KOs)

1 MIKEY GARCIA
U.S. • 39-1-0 (30 KOs)

2 RICHARD COMMEY
Ghana • 28-2-0 (25 KOs)

3 ROBERT EASTER
U.S. • 21-1-0 (14 KOs)

4 ANTHONY CROLLA
U.K. • 34-6-3 (13 KOs)

5 LUKE CAMPBELL
U.K. • 20-2-0 (16 KOs)

6 JOSE PEDRAZA
P.R. • 25-2-0 (12 KOs)

7 DEVIN HANEY
U.S. • 21-0-0 (13 KOs)

8 TEOFIMO LOPEZ
U.S. • 12-0-0 (10 KOs)

9 JAVIER FORTUNA
Dom. Rep. • 34-2-1 (23 KOs)

10 EMMANUEL TAGOE
Ghana • 30-1-0 (14 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 MIGUEL BERCHELT
Mexico • 35-1-0 (31 KOs)

2 GERVONTA DAVIS
U.S. • 21-0-0 (20 KOs)

3 TEVIN FARMER
U.S. • 29-4-1 (6 KOs)

4 FRANCISCO VARGAS
Mexico • 25-1-2 (18 KOs)

5 MASAYUKI ITO
Japan • 25-1-1 (13 KOs)

6 ANDREW CANCIO
U.S. • 20-4-2 (15 KOs)

7 JOSEPH DIAZ JR.
U.S. • 28-1-0 (14 KOs)

8 MIGUEL ROMAN
Mexico • 60-13-0 (47 KOs)

9 ALBERTO MACHADO
P.R. • 21-1-0 (17 KOs)

10 EDUARDO HERNANDEZ
Mexico • 27-0-0 (24 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 LEO SANTA CRUZ
U.S. • 36-1-1 (19 KOs)

2 JOSH WARRINGTON
U.K. • 28-0-0 (6 KOs)

3 GARY RUSSELL JR.
U.S. • 29-1-0 (17 KOs)

4 OSCAR VALDEZ
Mexico • 25-0-0 (20 KOs)

5 CARL FRAMPTON
U.K. • 26-2-0 (15 KOs)

6 ABNER MARES
Mexico • 31-3-1 (15 KOs)

7 SCOTT QUIGG
U.K. • 35-2-2 (26 KOs)

8 XU CAN
China • 16-2-0 (2 KOs)

9 TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR
Mongolia • 11-0-0 (9 KOs)

10 KID GALAHAD
U.K. • 26-0-0 (15 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

C (VACANT)

1 GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
Cuba • 18-1-0 (12 KOs)

2 REY VARGAS
Mexico • 33-0-0 (22 KOs)

3 EMANUEL NAVARRETE
Mexico • 26-1-0 (22 KOs)

4 DANIEL ROMAN
U.S. • 26-2-1 (10 KOs)

5 ISAAC DOGBOE
Ghana • 20-1-0 (14 KOs)

6 TJ DOHENY
Australia • 21-0-0 (15 KOs)

7 JESSIE MAGDALENO
U.S. • 25-1-0 (18 KOs)

8 DIEGO DE LA HOYA
Mexico • 21-0-0 (10 KOs)

9 TOMOKI KAMEDA
Japan • 36-2-0 (20 KOs)

10 RYOSUKE IWASA
Japan • 26-3-0 (16 KOs)

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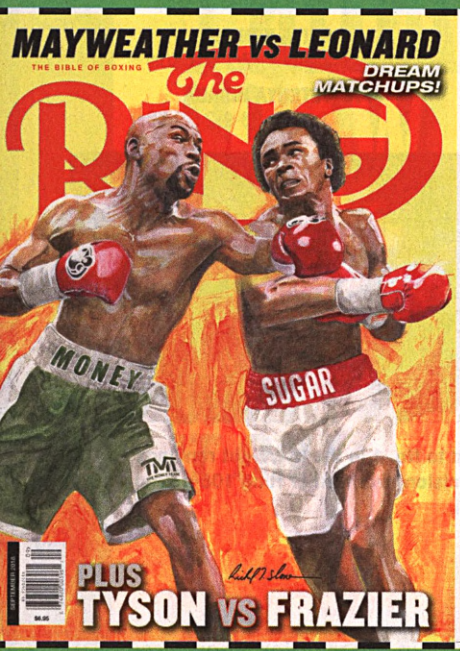

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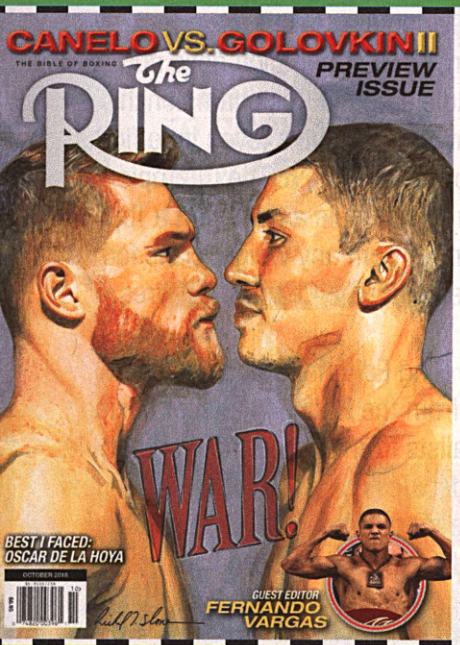

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RATINGS

Through fights of March 16, 2019

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 NAOYA INOUE**
  Japan • 17-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **2 ZOLANI TETE**
  S. Africa • 28-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **3 EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
  P.R. • 19-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **4 LUIS NERY**
  Mexico • 29-0-0 (23 KOs)
- **5 NONITO DONAIRE**
  Phil. • 39-5-0 (25 KOs)
- **6 RYAN BURNETT**
  U.K. • 19-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **7 NORDINE OUBAALI**
  France • 15-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **8 JASON MOLONEY**
  Australia • 17-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **9 TAKUMA INOUE**
  Japan • 13-0-0 (3 KOs)
- **10 CARLOS CUADRAS**
  Mexico • 37-3-1 (27 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

- **C SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
  Thailand • 47-4-1 (41 KOs)
- **1 JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
  Mexico • 38-3-0 (26 KOs)
- **2 DONNIE NIETES**
  Phil. • 42-1-5 (23 KOs)
- **3 KHALID YAFAI**
  U.K. • 25-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **4 KAZUTO IOKA**
  Japan • 23-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **5 JERWIN ANCAJAS**
  Phil. • 30-1-2 (20 KOs)
- **6 ROMAN GONZALEZ**
  Nicaragua • 47-2-0 (39 KOs)
- **7 ANDREW MOLONEY**
  Australia • 18-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **8 ASTON PALICTE**
  Phil. • 25-2-1 (21 KOs)
- **9 FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
  Mexico • 29-4-1 (21 KOs)
- **10 ALEJANDRO BARRIOS**
  Mexico • 17-2-5 (8 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 KOSEI TANAKA**
  Japan • 13-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2 MORUTI MTHALANE**
  S. Africa • 37-2-0 (25 KOs)
- **3 ARTEM DALAKIAN**
  Ukraine • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
- **4 ANDREW SELBY**
  U.K. • 11-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **5 CHARLIE EDWARDS**
  U.K. • 14-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **6 SHO KIMURA**
  Japan • 17-2-2 (10 KOs)
- **7 CRISTOFER ROSALES**
  Nicaragua • 28-4-0 (19 KOs)
- **8 MASAYUKI KURODA**
  Japan • 30-7-3 (16 KOs)
- **9 MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
  P.R. • 18-4-0 (14 KOs)
- **10 RYOICHI TAGUCHI**
  Japan • 27-4-2 (12 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

- **C HIROTO KYOGUCHI**
  Japan • 12-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **1 KEN SHIRO**
  Japan • 15-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **2 HEKKIE BUDLER**
  S. Africa • 32-4-0 (10 KOs)
- **3 CARLOS CANIZALES**
  Venezuela • 21-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **4 ANGEL ACOSTA**
  P.R. • 19-1-0 (19 KOs)
- **5 FELIX ALVARADO**
  Nicaragua • 34-2-0 (30 KOs)
- **6 REY LORETO**
  Phil • 24-14-0 (16 KOs)
- **7 MILAN MELINDO**
  Phil. • 37-4-0 (13 KOs)
- **8 EDWARD HENO**
  Phil. • 14-0-5 (5 KOs)
- **9 REIYA KONISHI**
  Japan • 17-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **10 TETSUYA HISADA**
  Japan • 33-9-2 (19 KOs)

Luis Nery advanced in the bantamweight rankings by overwhelming former 115-pound beltholder McJoe Arroyo in four rounds.

Kosei Tanaka advanced to No. 1 in the flyweight rankings with his unanimous decision over former Ring 108-pound champ Ryoichi Taguchi.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART**
  Thailand • 19-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2 WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
  Thailand • 52-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3 VIC SALUDAR**
  Phil. • 19-3-0 (10 KOs)
- **4 BYRON ROJAS**
  Nicaragua • 26-4-3 (11 KOs)
- **5 SIMPHIWE KHONCO**
  S. Africa • 19-5-0 (7 KOs)
- **6 DEEJAY KRIEL**
  S. Africa • 15-1-1 (7 KOs)
- **7 JOSE ARGUMEDO**
  Mexico • 23-4-1 (14 KOs)
- **8 TSUBASA KOURA**
  Japan • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **9 TATSUYA FUKUHARA**
  Japan • 21-6-6 (7 KOs)
- **10 CARLOS LICONA**
  U.S. • 14-1-0 (2 KOs)

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Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

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CALLING ALL WELTERWEIGHT TITLEHOLDERS: BRING IT ON!

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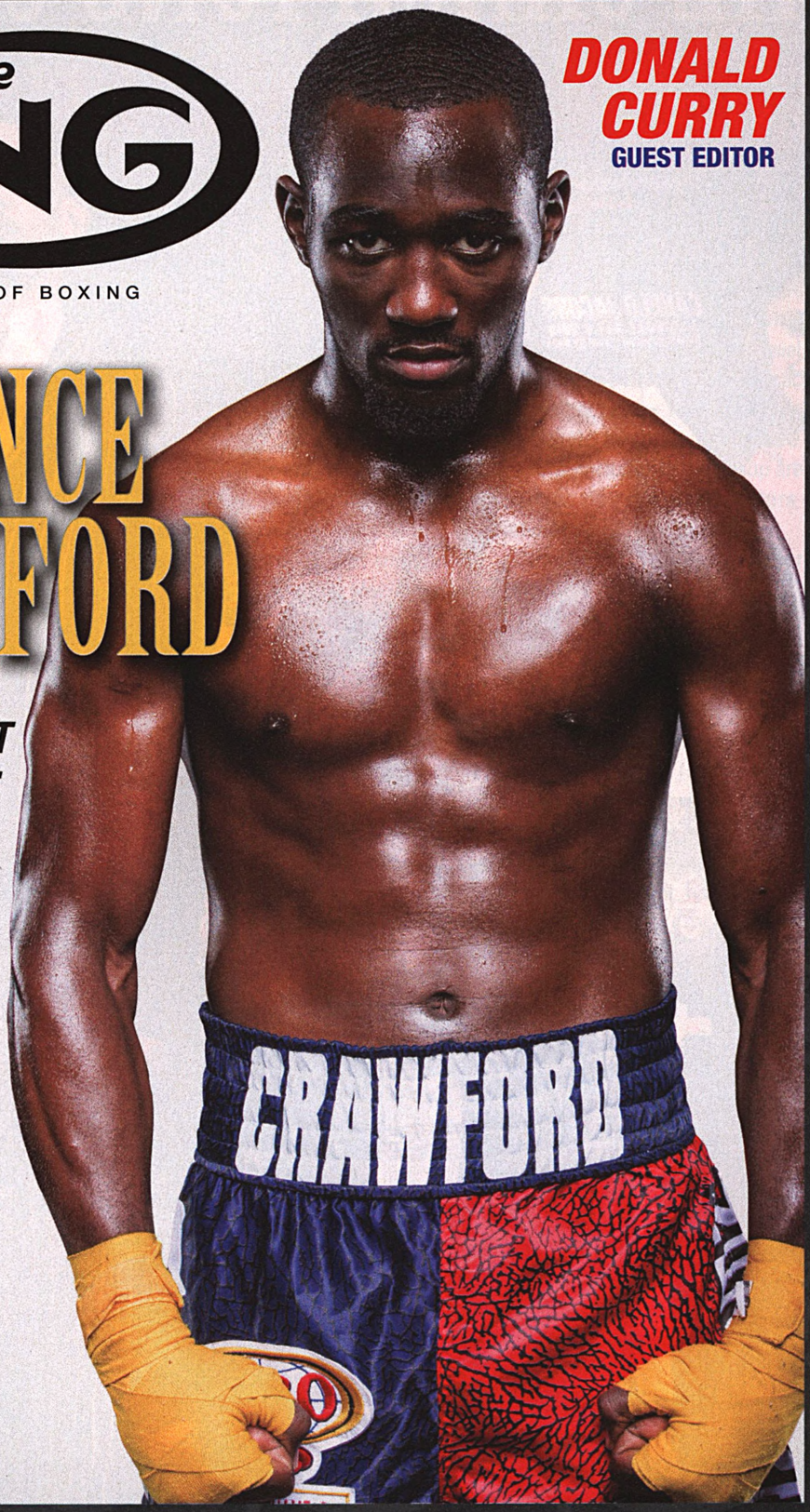
SHIELDS-HAMMER
TO CROWN MIDDLEWEIGHT QUEEN



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THE CHAMPIONS CORNER:

Canelo Alvarez and Daniel Jacobs will be putting some serious middleweight hardware on the line for their May 4 championship bout.

CANELO ALVAREZ VS. DANIEL JACOBS

TWELVE FORMER MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPS BREAK DOWN THE MAY 4 TITLE UNIFICATION SHOWDOWN

By **Tom Gray**

This fighter is going to DAZN! This fighter is going to ESPN! This fighter is going to Fox! This guy is getting $150 million! This guy is getting more than that! This guy …

You get the picture, right? We've been listening to business rhetoric for months.

Despite the fact that a plethora of in-demand matchups are being sabotaged by network allegiances and promotional bickering, boxing is certainly thriving in terms of dollars. The sport has never been more readily available to the consumer, and elite-level fighters are earning a fortune as a result. Would we deny them that? Absolutely not. They put their lives on the line for our entertainment. But let's dump the number-crunching and get down to punching.

In past decades, The Ring would build up to big fights by speaking to true boxing experts, most notably active or retired professionals. Did Jack Dempsey think Joe Louis could beat Rocky Marciano? What did Joe Frazier think of Muhammad Ali's chances against George Foreman? Could Thomas Hearns envision Sugar Ray Leonard upsetting Marvelous Marvin Hagler? There were scores of notable fights where contenders, ex-champions and reigning champions made predictions, and fight fans adored that insider perspective.

Well, the old-school approach is back for an old-school prizefight.

Ahead of the eagerly anticipated middleweight unification showdown between Canelo Alvarez and Daniel Jacobs on May 4, The Bible of Boxing reached out to as many former 160-pound titleholders as it could to obtain some pure fighter opinions. Included in the lineup are former champs, Hall of Famers, future Hall of Famers and all-time greats.

Simply put, who knows more than they do?

THE GUEST EDITOR PICK

KELLY PAVLIK

RING/WBC/WBO CHAMPION (2007-10)

"Daniel Jacobs is the total package – a big, athletic boxer-puncher who's also versatile and smart. This fight with Canelo could be a great one if he puts it all together on May 4, but I don't see Danny using what he's got. And that has more to do more with what's upstairs and what's in the heart than anything physical. If he fought to his full potential for even nine out of 12 rounds, he'd be unbeatable. But he doesn't do that.

"I like Danny a lot. I'm a huge fan of his and of Canelo. But being a Jacobs fan is frustrating. I can't put my finger on it, but it's like his mind is elsewhere during a fight. He'll have a great round, and in the very next round it's like he's mentally checked out of the fight and thinking about a shopping list or travel plans for next weekend. He's still able to win most of his fights because of his talent, but if I were interviewing him in the ring after some of his recent wins, my question to him would be, 'Why didn't you fight the entire fight like you did in the third round?'

Pavlik admires Canelo's heart and mental focus.

"The loss to Gennady Golovkin was probably his best performance. He's had great moments in all his fights, but the GGG fight stands out to me. It was surprising, because after he got dropped in the fourth round it was a whole new fight. He got up and used his boxing IQ, made the right moves, threw the right punches, and he used his body to get GGG's respect and gradually work his way into the fight. I wish he always fought like he fought over the second half of the Golovkin fight.

"What is it that Canelo has that Jacobs doesn't? Confidence. Mental focus. It's not like he's got more skill than Jacobs. He's got fast hands, solid chin, good defense, he's very smart and technically sound. Canelo's the total package too, but he's also got a lot of balls and heart. You're not going to see Canelo give up any time soon.

"He'll have to be on point to beat a boxer as big, fast and skillful as Jacobs. You gotta be prepared to fight Jacobs. And you have to FIGHT him. You have to stay active, because Jacobs takes breaks, he loses mental focus, almost like he'd rather be somewhere else.

"Canelo wins it. I can see him stopping Jacobs between rounds 8 and 12 from brutal body shots. Canelo is a dangerous body-puncher. I can see it getting brutal by the late rounds – even a corner retirement. I can also see it going the distance with Canelo winning it. I've seen too much of Jacobs not fighting to his potential to pick him.

"Of course, Canelo could drop him and wake him up like GGG did and we'll get a Fight of the Year. I think Jacobs wakes up halfway through the fight and makes it a fight, or Canelo wears him down and takes his heart. Canelo's got so much momentum right now. He could even make some noise at 168 pounds. He's hard to slow down right now."

PREDICTION: CANELO

THE CHAMPIONS CORNER:

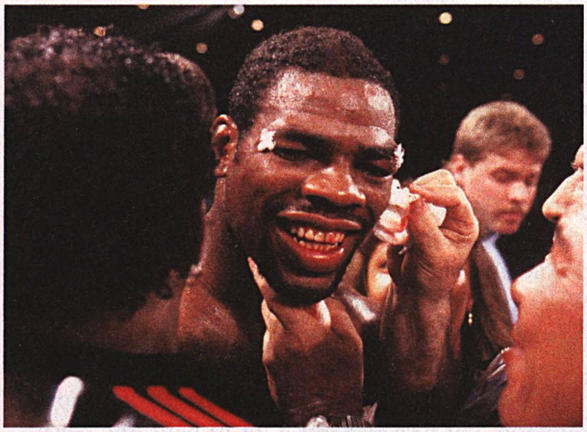
SUGAR RAY LEONARD

RING/WBC CHAMPION (1987)

"I've watched Canelo for a long time, and when he fought Floyd Mayweather I knew it was going to be a student against a teacher, and it was. But since then, I've seen Canelo develop, grow, get better each and every fight. I was impressed with him in the rematch against Golovkin, because he was aggressive and he controlled the tempo in that fight. My friends and I were blown away with those tactics, and we were saying, 'Surely he's not going to do that,' but he did. With Danny Jacobs, we should see the best of him in this fight. He's such an inspiration, having beaten cancer, and that's his toughest opponent ever. To do that says so much about his character, his belief and his heart. You cannot count Jacobs out against anyone, but styles make fights and I just edge towards Canelo."

PREDICTION: CANELO

Leonard's split decision over Marvin Hagler remains one of the most famous upsets in middleweight championship history.



"The Blade" flashes a bloody smile after knocking out Thomas Hearns to earn the WBC middleweight title.

IRAN BARKLEY

WBC CHAMPION (1988-89)

"Canelo was always going to be able to handle middleweight, because he was a big junior middleweight. Gaining the weight was going to be natural for him, and he's no pancake. Saying that, it was a surprise that he stood in front of Golovkin (in the rematch), and I think he'll try and do the same thing in this fight. But I've seen Jacobs; he's a good fighter, and I think he can pull this off. He has to be really sharp to go at him and use his jab and boxing skills. Jacobs can win a decision in Las Vegas, but he's gonna have to really fight, and it would be better if he got Canelo out of there. Jacobs should be looking to dominate this fight."

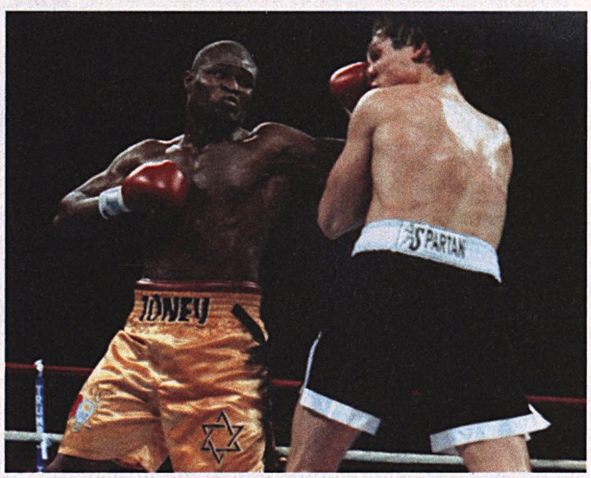
PREDICTION: JACOBS

JAMES TONEY

IBF CHAMPION (1991-93)

"Canelo's a good young fighter, but when he fights Jacobs he's fighting somebody special. It'll be a great fight regardless of what I think, but I believe Jacobs is the better fighter, the more skilled fighter, the smoother boxer, and he can punch. The second fight between Canelo and GGG was a great fight – my (first) fight with (Mike) McCallum was of a higher quality – but I feel that GGG won both of those fights. Jacobs isn't as big a puncher as GGG, but this will be the first time that Canelo is going in there with a top opponent who is just as big, or maybe even bigger. My money is going on Jacobs. I just think he's got more skills, more strength, and I think he's the harder puncher."

PREDICTION: JACOBS



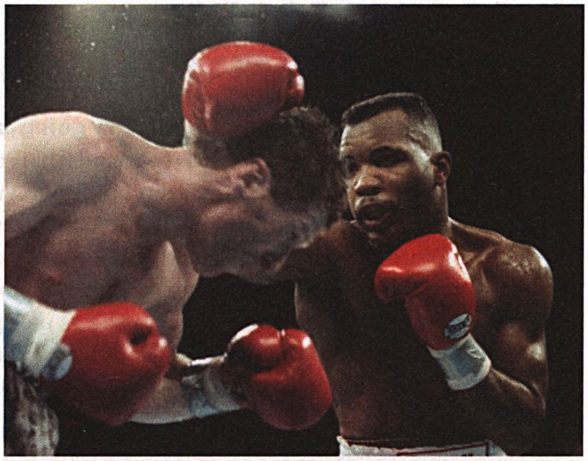
Toney respects Alvarez but believes Jacobs has too many tools for the Mexican star to contend with.

REGGIE JOHNSON

WBA CHAMPION (1992-93)

"I think that's a great fight. Canelo has learned so much since he fought Floyd (Mayweather Jr.). I think what he did to GGG was amazing; he took care of business. When Daniel Jacobs fought GGG, a lot of people thought he won that fight. (Canelo-Jacobs) is a 50-50 fight. I think this is a fight boxing really needs. With Jacobs knocking out cancer, it adds to his character, the man he is and his spirit – you've got to look at the guy from a different perspective. I just feel when a man survives and overcomes cancer, he can knock out anybody. I think it's going to be a very competitive, close fight and Jacobs is going to win a close split decision."

PREDICTION: JACOBS



Johnson views Canelo-Jacobs as an even matchup but gives Jacobs the edge based on his character.

Collins, who upset the odds by defeating Chris Eubank, loves underdogs, but he doesn't see Alvarez losing on May 4.

STEVE COLLINS

WBO CHAMPION (1994-95)

"It's a great fight for Jacobs, and I'm glad he's getting it. He's been plugging away for a long time, and this is a big opportunity for him. I just think Canelo is really special. I went over to Vegas for the Golovkin rematch and was very impressed with how he fought. I had him winning by three rounds, and it was a great fight. In fact, if they fight a third time, I actually think he'll stop Golovkin – that's how good I think Canelo is. Some fighters drop their game to the level of the opponent, but Canelo doesn't. If a fighter isn't on his level, he takes them out quick. This kid drops his game for nobody, and he's a pure professional. I love the underdog, but my heart says Jacobs and my head says Canelo."

PREDICTION: CANELO

BERNARD HOPKINS

IBF CHAMPION (1995-2005), UNDISPUTED CHAMPION (2001-05)

"Canelo will go through a round or two of adjusting to Jacobs' boxing ability, height, size. But while Jacobs' is the bigger fighter, Canelo is the more experienced of the two and he's hungrier. The reason I think he's hungrier is that $365 million contract with DAZN; he knows he has that money on paper, but he doesn't have it in the bank yet. That's a big incentive. Both have won world titles, so this fight is about building a legacy. I was instrumental in Canelo taking the fight and I was happy that he did. I rate Danny highly, but I like Canelo to win somewhere between the eighth and 10th rounds. I think Canelo, if he wants to, can win all the middleweight titles, and he might be the one to break my 20-defense record."

PREDICTION: CANELO

"B-Hop" respects Jacobs' boxing ability, but he believes Alvarez is in the midst of forging a historic legacy.

THE CHAMPIONS CORNER:

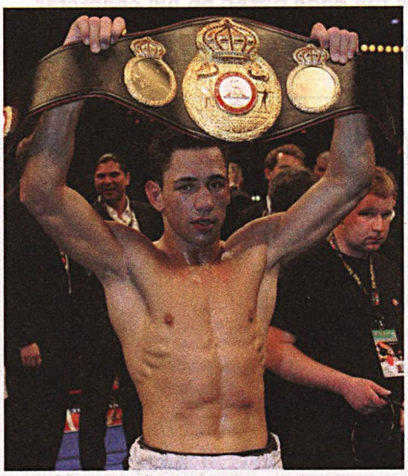
WILLIAM JOPPY

WBA CHAMPION (1996-97, 1998-2001)

"I think it's going to be a good fight. I'm going by what Jacobs did against GGG: He survived 12 rounds, but it seemed like he was fighting just to survive 12 rounds. I think he has to bring the fight (to Canelo). Jacobs fought in spurts against GGG and wanted to prove to people he could go 12 rounds with this knockout artist. Canelo does everything well; he can box, he has good footwork, he's a great fighter. I see Canelo as the aggressor. I see Canelo walking Jacobs down but Jacobs counterpunching. It's a close fight; I'm going to say Canelo by split decision."

PREDICTION: CANELO

Joppy envisions a close fight but favors Alvarez's complete skillset over Jacobs' sporadic boxing.



Sturm thinks Jacobs has more motivation to win a "50-50 fight."

FELIX STURM

WBO CHAMPION (2003-04), WBA CHAMPION (2006, 2007-12)

"Right now, Canelo is probably the strongest middleweight in the world, based on his victory over Golovkin. But Daniel Jacobs is bigger and he has a longer reach. Daniel needs to stay at distance, use his jab and control the fight. At the moment, Canelo is the top dog, the cash cow, and everyone wants to fight him, but I just hope for the sake of the boxing world that there are fair judges. I know from experience what can happen in the U.S. (Sturm lost a controversial decision to Oscar De La Hoya in Las Vegas in 2004), but Daniel Jacobs has Eddie Hearn, and he's a very powerful promoter. In boxing, the better man has to win, and for me this is a 50-50 fight. I just love the underdog, and Daniel has the bigger motivation; he's a cancer survivor, he's a world champion and he has the chance to become a huge star."

PREDICTION: JACOBS

SERGIO MARTINEZ

RING CHAMPION (2010-2014), WBC CHAMPION (2010-11, 2012-14), WBO CHAMPION (2010)

"Jacobs has a boxing style that is quite spectacular. Canelo's style is very effective, and that's the main difference: spectacular vs. effective. It's hard to see who has the best style. Jacobs had a great fight against Golovkin, Canelo had very even fights with GGG. To me, Canelo lost those two bouts, but in a third fight I am sure he could win more decisively. Even so, I believe there could be an upset in this fight. Actually, it's not really an upset; to me, Jacobs will win. It will be a close, tough fight, but if I had to bet on one of them, I'd go with Jacobs. He is a fighter that has almost rebuilt himself. He came back from a terminal disease and was up there trading punches with one of the best in the division – and in the pound-for-pound rankings. I mean, he is completely unafraid of anything and knows exactly what he has to do. He is capable of managing timing and distance. He is able to control his emotions. He is able to balance himself during the fight. This is important, and it makes him stronger. We know he will be in top physical shape, but mentally he is a terrific boxer. If I had to bet, I'd say I would go with Jacobs. Canelo is a great champion – I wouldn't be surprised to see Canelo win – but I am betting on Jacobs, yes sir!"

PREDICTION: JACOBS

Martinez, who says Jacobs has a more "spectacular" style than Alvarez, is betting on the American underdog.

DARREN BARKER

IBF CHAMPION (2013)

"I have Canelo the favorite, but I think Jacobs could push him all the way. Jacobs has to be smart, and he can't allow Canelo to hold the center of the ring. If I was Jacobs, I would edge as close to center ring as I could. But if Canelo is able to keep him off and hold center ring, it's important for Jacobs to keep space behind him so that he can move. Jacobs didn't look at his best for (Sergiy) Derevyanchenko, but I think he'll rise to the occasion for this one. Look at how well Jacobs did against Golovkin, and there was a lot of people who had him winning. Both guys did very well against Golovkin, and he'll go down as one of the greatest middleweights of all time. I just think Canelo is so consistent, and even though there will be a lot of close rounds, I think his class and Mexican pride will see him through. I fancy Canelo on points."

PREDICTION: CANELO

Barker says Jacobs will rise to the occasion but believes Alvarez's pride and consistency will win out on May 4.

Lee loves the Canelo-Jacobs matchup and thinks Alvarez's "well-rounded" game will earn a close victory.

ANDY LEE

WBO CHAMPION (2014-15)

"I think this is the best fight out there at middleweight, and you have to commend both men for stepping up. If Canelo wins, for me he would be at the top of the pound-for-pound list, based on all the guys he's beat. But Jacobs is not an easy fight for him, and he'll present things that no other fighter in the division is capable of. He's got experience, athleticism, height, power and ring craft. Jacobs showed in the Golovkin fight that he knows how to manage a fight for 12 rounds and pick his spots; he was defensive when he had to be and he was offensive when he had to be. They're hard to split, but I would favor Canelo because he's such a well-rounded boxer: He can fight on the back foot, he can fight going forward, he's a brilliant counterpuncher, he can attack the body. It's very close, but I'll give the edge to Canelo on points."

PREDICTION: CANELO

TOTALS:

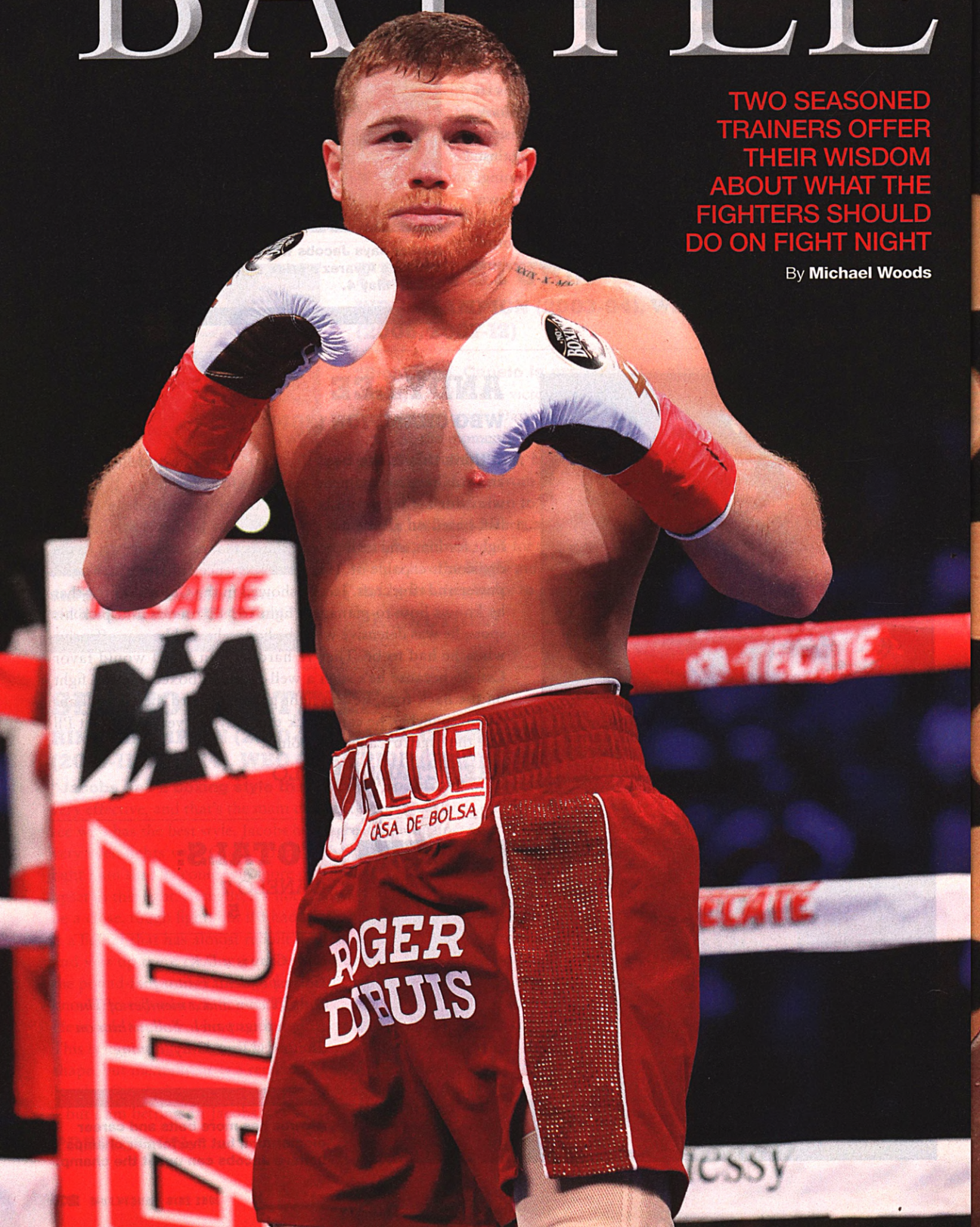
CANELO 7
JACOBS 5

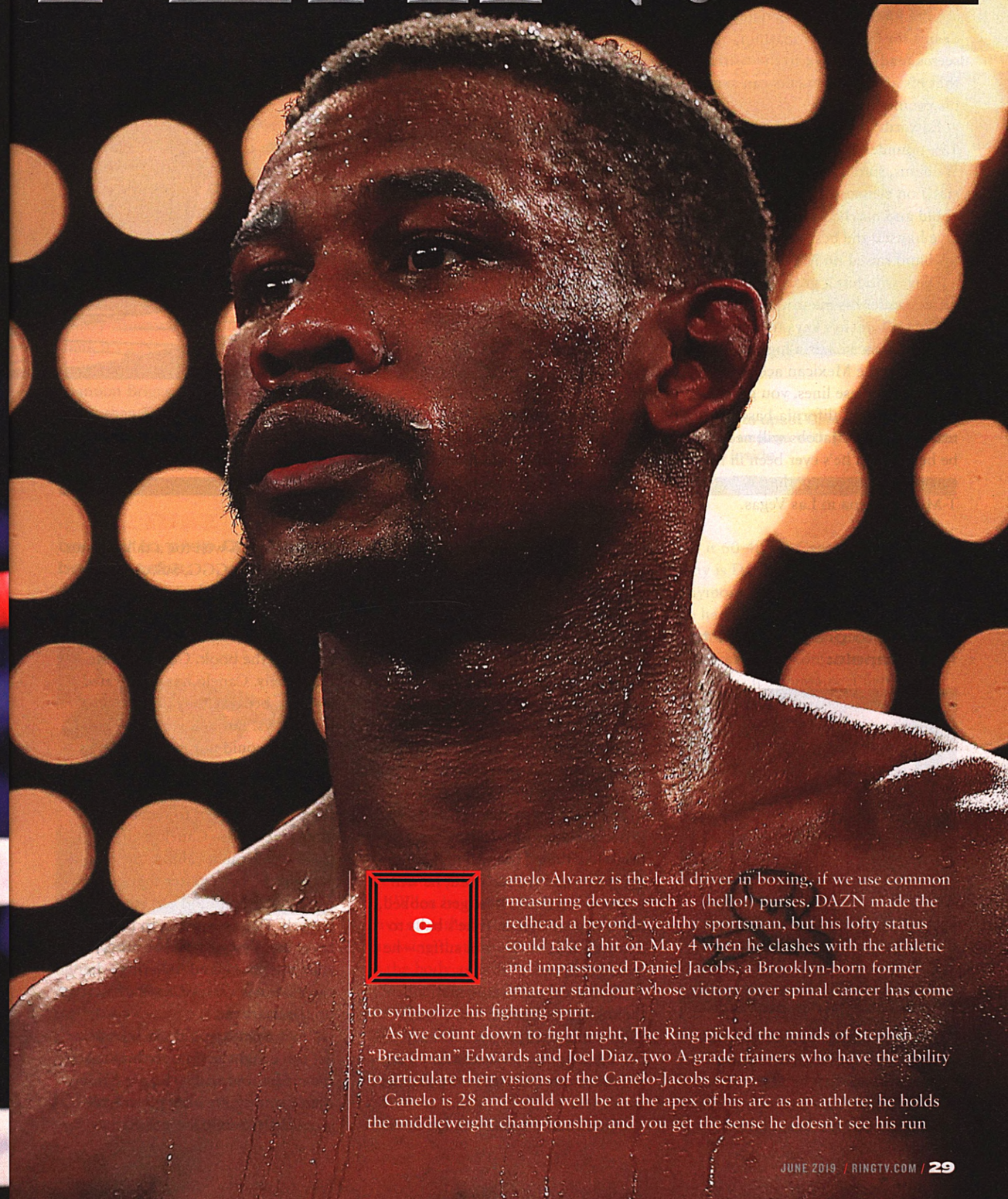
Tom Gray is a U.K. Correspondent/ Editor for RingTV.com and a member of The Ring ratings panel. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing

Alvarez has more belts and career momentum, but five former champs believe Jacobs can upset the champ.

BATTLE PLAN:

CANELO ALVAREZ VS. DANIEL JACOBS





TWO SEASONED TRAINERS OFFER THEIR WISDOM ABOUT WHAT THE FIGHTERS SHOULD DO ON FIGHT NIGHT

By **Michael Woods**

Canelo Alvarez is the lead driver in boxing, if we use common measuring devices such as (hello!) purses. DAZN made the redhead a beyond-wealthy sportsman, but his lofty status could take a hit on May 4 when he clashes with the athletic and impassioned Daniel Jacobs, a Brooklyn-born former amateur standout whose victory over spinal cancer has come to symbolize his fighting spirit.

As we count down to fight night, The Ring picked the minds of Stephen "Breadman" Edwards and Joel Diaz, two A-grade trainers who have the ability to articulate their visions of the Canelo-Jacobs scrap.

Canelo is 28 and could well be at the apex of his arc as an athlete; he holds the middleweight championship and you get the sense he doesn't see his run

ending any time soon. He gives an aura of supreme confidence but doesn't resort to cocky pronouncements to convey his belief in himself. Jacobs, age 32, has shown a more intense POV in banging the drums for the DAZN mashup; he seems ready to prove to the world that his accomplishments can surpass his promise.

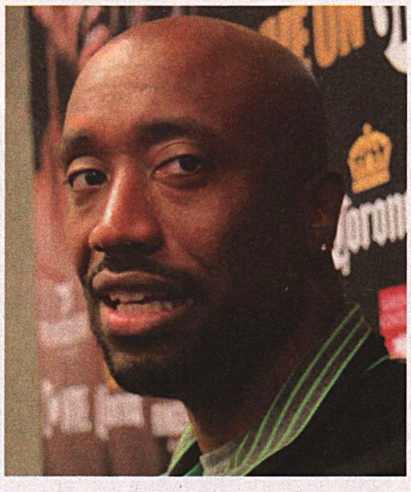
Edwards, who tutors a world-class 154-pounder in Julian "J-Rock" Williams, summoned up tips of the trade on elements he believes Jacobs could and maybe should employ to give himself the best chance to have his hand raised on May 4.

Diaz, who has a growing stable of hitters under his mentoring umbrella, spoke on Canelo's keys to victory, and it is clear he has a high level of regard for the Mexican ace. Reading in-between these lines, you get the sense that the California-based teacher believes Jacobs will need to be better than he's ever been in the squared circle to snag the "W" at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas.

One of Canelo's keys to victory against Jacobs is his devastating body attack.

STEPHEN "BREADMAN" EDWARDS

on how to prep Jacobs to fight Canelo:



"The first thing is, Jacobs has been primed for this moment the last couple years. When he first started, he didn't have high-level competition, but for the last few years he has. Peter Quillin, that was looked at as a 50-50. (Jacobs) won easily, and nobody knew going in what would happen. He fought GGG – and was the underdog – Sulecki and Derevyanchenko, both not known but both tough fights. He should have a lot of confidence; he went 12 with those guys.

"Danny has to establish the jab, has to make Canelo pick up his feet. Canelo doesn't really have weaknesses; he can fight his ass off. He's a great fighter. Danny can't run. If he runs, he won't get the decision. He's got to move, slippery movement, and come back. Keep it simple.

"The unwritten rule is Canelo gets close decisions. Danny can't think like that. That will make him overpress and try too hard; he will run into big shots. If he gets robbed, the world will see it. If he's balls to the wall, his defense will suffer – he will get clipped.

"Canelo always stays calm when the other gets frantic; he's always calm under that pressure. Danny can't go, 'I gotta go kamikaze.' He will burn out and run into a shot he won't see.

"One Danny weakness: He doesn't defend the jab well for a taller, faster fighter. Versus GGG, Sulecki and Derevyanchenko, he got hit some by that jab. He has to defend the jab well. But Canelo can throw every punch in the book. Canelo is elite offensively. Canelo has underrated trainers, because they don't train a lot of guys. But he's very, very good.

"GGG could not match Danny's handspeed, but he snapped the head with the jab over and over. Danny can't run – he's got to remain calm under the storm. Canelo's gift is to always remain calm. Canelo is going to be better after that second GGG fight; he found out stuff about himself. Danny is going to have to up his game. I've seen Jacobs hit GGG, start screaming and hollering – he can't do that versus Canelo. It screws up the heart rate!

"As a fighter, you don't wanna get too caught up in overthinking the judges and stuff – bigger fighters than Danny have been given bad scorecards. Some don't think

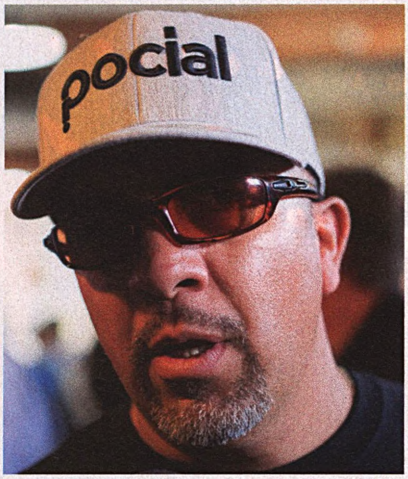
Oscar (De La Hoya) lost to Tito (Trinidad). Pernell (Whitaker) got screwed. Danny has to be smart and conscious. Moving too much can make it look like running; if Danny moves too much, it will look like he's running from Canelo. He can't give that impression. He can use his handspeed to back Canelo off the plate a little bit.

"But Canelo picks up something every fight. I expect him to evolve for this, walk to Danny in a calm manner. Danny has to look like he is in control. If he doesn't give the appearance of being in control, he looks frantic and out of control. Canelo, even when he gets his ass kicked, he has the same demeanor. Danny sometimes gets frazzled. I think it's a New York thing – hyper dudes. Marcus Browne, Zab Judah, Shannon Briggs, Mike Tyson … think about that. Danny has to match the calm demeanor of Canelo and not be coming apart under pressure."

In order to upset Canelo, Jacobs will have to engage with the Mexican star on the inside.

JOEL DIAZ

on how to prep Canelo to beat Jacobs:



"We know Danny is a great fighter – good on his feet, he's a mover, he's slick, smart, hits and moves. The Canelo plan of attack should be: Be composed from the beginning, use smart pressure.

"Don't try to exchange in the early rounds – wait two or three rounds, and use pressure to the body from the beginning. Every time Danny makes a move, execute to the body. (Canelo) should be closing the gap. Close the gap. After the third or fourth, unload a little to the top, start cutting corners, use the straight right and left hook up top.

"Most of all, wear down Danny with the pressure and body attack. If Danny jabs, attack to the body! Always to the body! And when they figure each other out, put combos together. With the combos, start to the top, finish to the body and vice versa.

"In camp, part of training is bringing in similar styles – you can't have exactly the same, but you can get similar styles to help work on strategy. Jacobs works very well with the jab; as he moves, he throws a jab, then moves back and tries to counter.

"When he throws the jab, always have something for him so he stops throwing that jab. He jabs, hit him to the body as soon as he jabs. And stop him from using the jab along the ropes. I train fighters (to do the following): If (the opponent) jabs a lot, hit him to the ribs or use the straight right. They will stop using the jab as much.

"Is this a 50-50 fight, or 60-40? I see it 60-40 for Canelo. The reason why is Danny's not in his prime anymore. He's a little past his prime, he had cancer – that takes a lot out of you. He's going in against a fighter full of confidence, strong, young … It's gonna be a fight, don't get me wrong – Jacobs is a warrior – but Canelo is physically the stronger fighter. He's younger, more active. In the last fight, Jacobs vs. Derevyanchenko, I saw the possibility of Canelo beating Daniel. I didn't see the Danny I wanted to see that night. If you were putting Canelo in that position, that night, Canelo would have beat him.

"Danny, to beat Canelo, has to be really smart. He has to frustrate Canelo. Danny needs to frustrate him, get him out of his game plan, be good with his feet, smother Canelo in a way. He can create space, hit and hit, then hold, stop the action. If he tries to stay at range, tries to exchange, Canelo will get the best of him." RING

Canelo Alvarez and Daniel Jacobs are almost evenly matched in terms of boxing ability, athleticism and experience.

CANELO-JACOBS:

HEAD-TO-HEAD ANALYSIS

By **Tom Gray**

Arguably, it's the most significant middleweight unification bout since Bernard Hopkins schooled Puerto Rican idol Felix Trinidad at Madison Square Garden on September 29, 2001.

And that is not hyperbole.

On May 4 at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, the treasure that was at stake when Hopkins faced Trinidad will be up for grabs when Canelo Alvarez and Daniel Jacobs duke it out for middleweight supremacy. Canelo will defend the Ring, WBA and WBC championships (as well as a high rung on most pound-for-pound lists) while Jacobs brings the IBF belt and quite possibly one of Canelo's most formidable challenges.

Canelo was confirmed as middleweight ruler when he scored a 12-round majority decision over long-reigning titleholder Gennady Golovkin in a September rematch, which followed their infamous draw a year earlier. The sequel could have gone either way, but while that dispute will almost undoubtedly resume in the future, a new rivalry is taking center stage.

Jacobs, four years Canelo's senior at 32, finally became a titleholder in October when he scored a 12-round split decision over Sergiy Derevyanchenko to lift the vacant IBF belt. It wasn't vintage "Miracle Man" by any means, but it was enough to get the job done and realize a dream. For a clearer example of what Jacobs is capable of, one only had to look at his March 2017 battle with Golovkin. Despite losing by unanimous decision, the challenger tested his fearsome opponent to the limit, and there were those who felt he'd done enough to prevail.

We've seen Canelo-Golovkin, we've seen Golovkin-Jacobs, but what we haven't seen is Canelo-Jacobs. In the tradition of the middleweight division's greatest fights, fans the world over now look forward to an all-action showdown that can hopefully stand beside the 160-pound classics that have come before it.

Let's attempt to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of both men by applying scores between 0-5 in key areas. »

THE KEYS

HANDSPEED

Both men have terrific handspeed. Canelo is capable of putting more shots together, which makes the bursts look more spectacular, but when Jacobs lets them go in threes and fours, he can be equally effective.

CANELO ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★½

ENDURANCE

These are two high-quality champions with superb engines. Each man is accustomed to going the full 12 rounds against world-level competition, retaining their poise and shape even when under fire. Both are combatants at their athletic peak.

CANELO ★★★★
JACOBS ★★★★

FOOTWORK

This is a real area of strength for Jacobs. The New Yorker used quick feet to offset Golovkin, who as a result was unable to inflict his customary fight-ending damage. Canelo has nice footwork, as he proved in the first encounter with GGG, but he's less reliant on it.

CANELO ★★★★
JACOBS ★★★★½

POWER (LEAD HAND)

Canelo's left hand is dynamite, and he looks to have brought the power up from 154. He may not have dropped Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. or GGG, but he kept two very durable fighters honest with the threat of his left-hand power. A more than serviceable shot for Jacobs.

CANELO ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★

POWER (BACK HAND)

The Jacobs right hand has put many an opponent on rubber legs. The memory of Canelo knocking out Amir Khan with a single right hand will live long in the memory, but Khan was vulnerable two weights below. This shot belongs to Jacobs.

CANELO ★★★★
JACOBS ★★★★½

JAB

Canelo has a bursting left jab that comes off more like a power shot. But while the Mexican's lead hand has more impact, Jacobs is more consistent with the stick. Golovkin out-jabbed Canelo over two fights, and it's doubtful that he wins this battle against Jacobs.

CANELO ★★★★
JACOBS ★★★★½

HOOK

Canelo's left hook is near-flawless. He hooks off the feint, hooks off the jab and mixes this punch up and down brilliantly. Jacobs is no slouch in this department, but he can't match Canelo on this one. No fighter can.

CANELO ★★★★★
JACOBS ★★★★

ABILITY TO SLIP AND BLOCK

Over the past three years, Canelo's defense has moved to another level. He picks off shots adeptly with the gloves, slips and rolls effortlessly and changes the height of the target by bending at the waist. Jacobs can do all of this too, but Canelo is a notch above.

CANELO ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★

PHYSICAL CONDITION

Both men have taken part in fast-paced 12-rounders and they rarely looked ruffled. There's a knock on Canelo that he fades late, but while there may be some truth to that, no fighter has been truly able to truly exploit it. The pair will be in exceptional condition come fight time.

CANELO ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★½

POISE AND ABILITY TO COPE WITH EXTERNAL PRESSURES

Jacobs overcame cancer to become a better fighter and a world champion. That's astonishing. Canelo put the most controversial period of his career (tested positive for trace amounts of clenbuterol) behind him to turn in a career-best performance against Golovkin (regardless of whether you think he won or lost).

CANELO ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★★

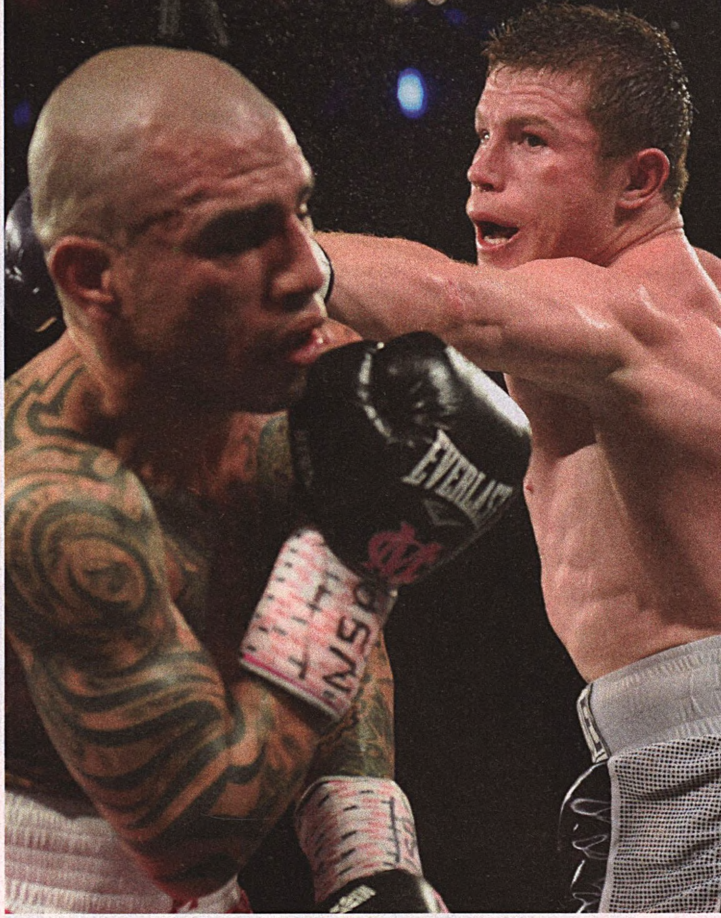
KILLER INSTINCT

If Jacobs gets you going, then you better keep your hands high. After hurting former titleholder Peter Quillin in December 2015, "The Miracle Man" attacked with fury and ended the fight in the very first round. Canelo is a touch more measured but no less clinical if given the chance.

CANELO ★★★★
JACOBS ★★★★½

INTELLIGENCE AND STRATEGIC DEXTERITY

Despite close encounters with Golovkin, Canelo displayed his amazing ability to adapt and adjust in superfights. He boxed beautifully at times in fight one, then went on the offensive for the rematch, shocking fight fans and Team GGG in the process. Jacobs looked subpar in back-to-back wins over Maciej Sulecki and Derevyanchenko, and tactical adjustments might have made a difference in



Alvarez used a world-class jab and left hook to outpoint Miguel Cotto.

Jacobs' poise and athleticism helped see him through a tough fight with Sergiy Derevyanchenko.

those performances.
CANELO ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★

EXPERIENCE
Canelo went pro at 15 and is now approaching his 29th birthday. The younger man has had 54 professional fights and looks to be a complete fighter. Jacobs has only had 37 paid fights, but he makes up the deficit with an excellent 137-7 amateur record and four New York Golden Gloves titles.
CANELO ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★½

BODY PUNCHING
This is an area where Canelo excels (he is Mexican, after all). His ability to get inside and rip the midsection was evident in both fights against Golovkin. Jacobs can work the body effectively when he wants to, but if there's a headhunter here, it's definitely Jacobs.
CANELO ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★

INFIGHTING SKILLS
If Jacobs finds himself on the inside, then he's more than capable of finding room for power shots in that posture. But what you'll frequently find is the Brooklyn native gets off and quickly looks for a route back to long range. Canelo is more comfortable up close and has more variety.
CANELO ★★★★
JACOBS ★★★½

QUALITY OF OPPONENTS
With the exception of Manny Pacquiao, it is difficult to think of an active fighter who has faced more elite-level opponents than Canelo. Despite being only 28 years of age, he has mixed with Shane Mosley, Austin Trout, Floyd Mayweather, Erislandy Lara, Miguel Cotto and Golovkin (twice), among others.
CANELO ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★

CHIN AND RESILIENCE
Canelo is almost bulletproof. He has never been knocked down in his professional career, and Golovkin only managed to buzz him a handful of times through 24 rounds. Although Jacobs' knockout defeat to Dmitry Pirog was several years ago, he was floored by Sergio Mora and Golovkin.
CANELO ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★

CROSS/UPPERCUT
Jacobs has the edge on the right cross, and it's a proven weapon. This is evened up by Canelo's use of the uppercut, which is a fantastic weapon from both sides.
CANELO ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★½

ATHLETICISM
Jacobs is the more athletic of the two. While hand-eye coordination and reflexes may be equal, Jacobs is a faster mover, and he is also an adept switch-hitter. You need excellent athleticism and confidence to turn lefty on Golovkin, but that is precisely what Jacobs did, and he was effective.
CANELO ★★★★
JACOBS ★★★★½

CORNER – Both fighters benefit from being coached by two of the finest trainers in the sport. Andre Rozier, who works with Jacobs, is a former amateur fighter who has developed into a world-class coach. He also trains IBF lightweight champion Richard Commey. Eddy Reynoso has worked with Canelo from the beginning of his career, developing him from prospect to the biggest star in boxing. **CANELO** ★★★★½
JACOBS ★★★★½

TOTALS:
ALVAREZ 87
(single category average 4.4)
JACOBS 85.5
(single category average 4.3)

SUMMARY AND PREDICTION
The numbers favor Canelo, and so does the prediction. Jacobs's size, speed and athleticism will undoubtedly cause the Mexican icon some problems, but Canelo has the ability to adjust during fights. He may have to come from behind to win, but I think Canelo takes control of ring center and makes Jacobs work harder than he wants to. The body attack is crucial, and Canelo must punish the midsection at every opportunity. Jacobs might turn southpaw intermittently, but Canelo will be expecting that and has the versatility and skills to deal with the lefty stance. A distance win for Canelo in Las Vegas is the smart call, but I forsee the Cinco de Mayo celebrations beginning early when Jacobs can no longer absorb the punishment coming his way.

– CANELO ALVAREZ TKO 10 DANIEL JACOBS

Tom Gray is a U.K. correspondent/editor for RingTV.com and a member of THE RING ratings panel. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing.

MEXICO VS USA

FANS CAN EXPECT UNFORGETTABLE ACTION WHEN THE BEST BOXERS FROM THESE TWO NATIONS MEET IN THE RING

By **The Ring staff**

Unbeaten Olympic gold medalist Meldrick Taylor and undefeated three-division champ Julio Cesar Chavez combined to make The Ring's 1990 Fight of the Year and the Fight of the Decade.

Two world-famous boxing nations and literally thousands of blood-splashed rounds.

When the best of Mexico takes on the best of the U.S. in a prizefight, the likelihood is that hardcore fight fans will not be disappointed. The battles have been waged on both sides of the border, from famed arenas like The Forum in Inglewood, California, to the unusual setting of a bullring in Tijuana.

Old-school and modern-day greats such as Henry Armstrong, Bobby Chacon, Danny Lopez, Thomas Hearns, Pernell Whitaker, Oscar De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather Jr. have represented the stars and stripes against Mexican contemporaries like Baby Arizmendi, Ruben Olivares, Salvador Sanchez, Pipino Cuevas, Julio Cesar Chavez and Juan Manuel Marquez. Within this mix and beyond were some of the most compelling fights ever seen.

The latest installment in big-time Mexico-USA showdowns will take place at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas on May 4 when Canelo Alvarez defends the Ring, WBA and WBC middleweight championships against IBF counterpart Daniel Jacobs. For Canelo, victory will bolster a legacy that is already taking shape, while Jacobs is determined to secure his first superfight triumph.

As we now close in on the biggest fight of the year to date, we can only hope for something memorable. One thing is for sure: To rival many of the showdowns we look back on now, the passion and respective styles of these reigning middleweight champions will need to mix into one very potent fistic cocktail on Cinco De Mayo weekend.

JAN. 10, 1939
HENRY ARMSTRONG W PTS 10 BABY ARIZMENDI

From November 1934 to January 1939, Armstrong and Arizmendi contested five – yes, five – epic battles spanning featherweight to welterweight. Arizmendi won the first encounter despite reportedly breaking

his wrist in Round 2, as well as the rematch. However, "Homicide Hank" defeated his rival three times over, including this welterweight championship defense in fight No. 5. Arizmendi was one of very few fighters who could live with Armstrong's breakneck pace. Neither man ever knocked the other out, and every fight went the scheduled distance.

JUNE 20, 1975
RUBEN OLIVARES *TKO 2* BOBBY CHACON

After losing his unbeaten record to former bantamweight champion Olivares via ninth-round stoppage, Chacon would capture the vacant WBC featherweight crown. Seeking revenge, he faced off against Olivares in his second defense and once again fell short. The Mexican star destroyed the reportedly weight-drained new champion, flooring him twice in a brutal second round and forcing the referee's intervention. Chacon, who fought out of Sylmar, California, claimed a measure of revenge two years later when he won a 10-round decision over his fading foe.

DEC. 4, 1975
DANNY LOPEZ *KO 7* RUBEN OLIVARES

Olivares lost his newly acquired WBC featherweight title to Ghana's David Kotey and survived the riot that erupted at The Forum afterward. Unfortunately, in his first comeback fight, he was matched against "Little Red" Lopez. Both fighters were down in a wild first round, but Olivares was down again in the second and gradually deteriorated as the bout progressed. The Utah-born Lopez knocked his man out with a powerful right to the jaw.

FEB. 2, 1980
SALVADOR SANCHEZ *TKO 13* DANNY LOPEZ

The emergence of the great Sanchez to elite level was always a matter of when, not if. His coronation came at the expense of Lopez, who was attempting to make the ninth defense of his WBC featherweight title. Both fighters were cut during the course of a brutal encounter, although Lopez's facial damage was a lot more severe. Finally, a vicious combination from the challenger hurt Lopez badly and the referee wisely stopped the contest. Sanchez repeated the result in a direct rematch that lasted one round longer.

AUGUST 2, 1980
THOMAS HEARNS *TKO 2* PIPINO CUEVAS

Cuevas was attempting to make the 12th defense of his WBA welterweight title and had been champion for more than four years. Hearns, the most feared 147-pounder in boxing, brought a 28-0 (26 knockouts) record to the Joe Louis Arena in Detroit and put on a display of pure devastation. A short right hand in Round 2 caused the champion to involuntarily hula-hoop at the waist, and that gave "The Hitman" just enough time to load up with another right-hand bomb that smashed him into the canvas. Cuevas miraculously rose, but his corner team came to the rescue.

Danny Lopez scored the most significant KO of his career against the legendary Ruben Olivares.

MARCH 17, 1990
JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ *TKO 12* MELDRICK TAYLOR

The fight of the decade? In a battle of unbeatens, Taylor, a gold medalist at the 1984 Olympics, put his IBF junior welterweight title on the line against WBC counterpart – and Mexican legend – Chavez. The American dominated with blinding flurries but slowly began to fade during the championship sessions. Chavez decked Taylor just before the final bell, but the Philly warrior was up and literally two seconds from claiming a split-decision win when referee Richard Steele made perhaps the most controversial stoppage in boxing history.

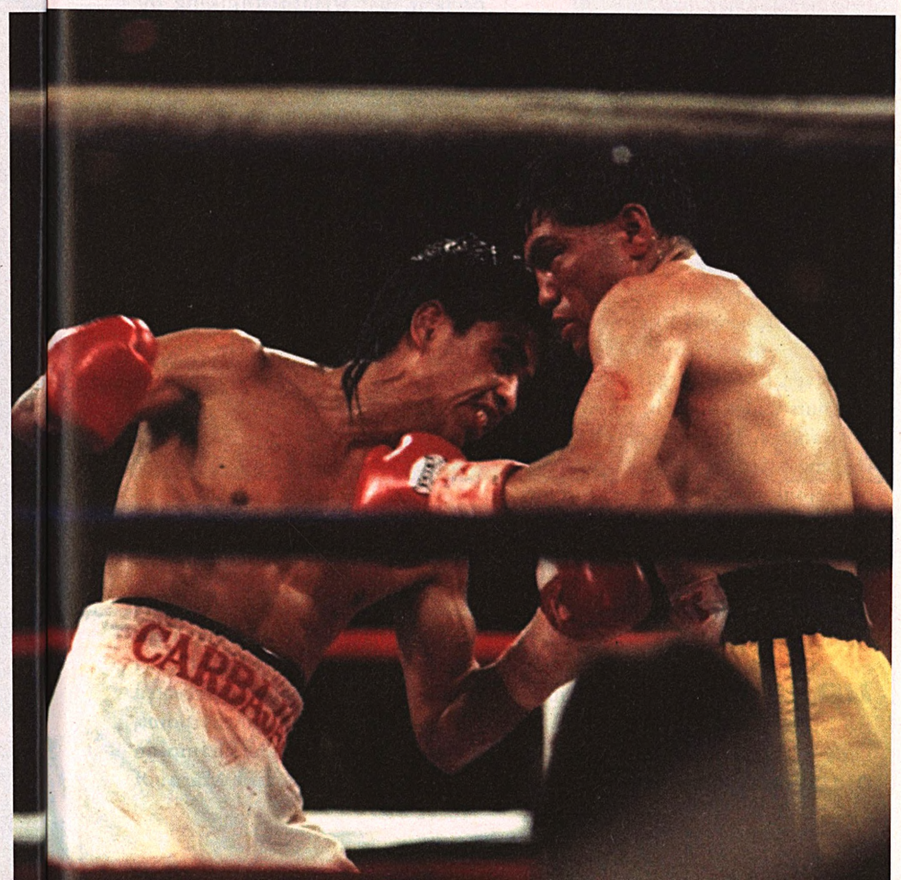
MARCH 13, 1993
MICHAEL CARBAJAL *KO 7* HUMBERTO GONZALEZ

The junior flyweight title unification showdown that had everything. Carbajal down in Round 2. Gonzalez cut badly in Round 3. Carbajal down and seriously hurt in Round 5. Gonzalez – way ahead in the fight – knocked out by a brilliant left hook in Round 7. The first junior flyweight title fight to headline a pay-per-view card was also named The Ring's Fight of the Year. Gonzalez would avenge the loss by posting two close decision wins over his American rival, but it's doubtful that any 108-pound championship fight has ever matched their first encounter.

Michael Carbajal's up-from-the-canvas KO of Humberto Gonzalez was The Ring's 1993 Fight of the Year.

SEPT. 10, 1993
PERNELL WHITAKER *D 12* JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ

Whitaker and Chavez would face off in a 145-pound catchweight contest with the former's WBC welterweight title at stake. After a cautious opening two rounds, Whitaker seemed to pull away and dominate the tactical battle. Chavez could scarcely land a punch on his dazzling southpaw foe, but his unbeaten record was saved by a ludicrous majority draw. Regardless, Whitaker was dutifully anointed as the pound-for-pound king on the basis of what was a special performance.



JAN. 29, 1994
FRANKIE RANDALL *SD 12* JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ

Known as "The Surgeon," Randall was a talented fighter whose career had been blighted by drug abuse and jail time. The Alabama native was a huge underdog but turned in the performance of a lifetime. A stunning 11th-round knockdown would secure him the decision and the WBC junior welterweight title. This was Chavez's first defeat in 91 fights (counting the Randall bout). The Mexican superstar would win a rematch by controversial technical decision when he was cut by a clash of heads. Chavez also outpointed his rival when both men were in their senior years.

FEB. 3, 1996
MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA *TKO 12* KENNEDY MCKINNEY

This bout was featured on the inaugural episode of HBO's Boxing After Dark series and was an instant classic. Barrera was red-hot in a compelling fight and appeared to be on the verge of a stoppage after scoring knockdowns in the eighth and ninth rounds. However, McKinney, a 1988 Olympic gold medalist, sensationally floored "The Baby Faced Assassin" in the 11th and set up the possibility of a dramatic turnaround. It was not to be, however, as a rampaging Barrera closed out with two knockdowns in the final session to defend his WBO junior featherweight title.

JUNE 7, 1996
OSCAR DE LA HOYA *TKO 4* JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ

With less than a minute gone in

MEXICO VS. USA

Round 1, blood flowed freely from a two-inch wound over the left eye of Chavez. Three rounds later, the old champion looked like he was leaking claret from every orifice. The story goes that Chavez covered a cut sustained in training with heavy makeup, and it didn't help matters when De La Hoya entered the bout in devastating form. Every punch in the book nailed Chavez in a brutal fourth session, and the WBC junior welterweight title and a blood-splattered torch was officially passed to "The Golden Boy." De La Hoya stopped Chavez in a welterweight rematch two years later.

Junior Jones shocked the boxing world with back-to-back victories over Marco Antonio Barrera.

NOV. 22, 1996
JUNIOR JONES *DQ 5* MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA

On the verge of pound-for-pound recognition, then-unbeaten (43-0) Barrera elected to face Jones, a talented boxer-puncher from Brooklyn. However, the warning signs were there early for the champion, who was shaken on several occasions and cut from a headbutt before a lightning-bolt right decked him in the fifth. Barrera found his feet but was taking a hailstorm of leather when his corner entered the ring a second before the bell rang to end the round. That led to a DQ loss, and "Poison" Junior Jones confirmed his superiority by outpointing Barrera in a direct rematch.

SEPT. 12, 1998
ERIK MORALES *TKO 4* JUNIOR JONES

This bout took place inside a bullring in Morales' home city of Tijuana, and Jones would have felt a million miles away from home before a punch was even thrown. Following his victories over Barrera, Jones was upset by Kennedy McKinney and sought redemption against Morales, who was the WBC junior featherweight champ. He competed well until the fourth round, when a booming right hand from "El Terrible" put him over. Jones couldn't regain his equilibrium and was taking heavy punishment before the referee intervened.

DEC. 12, 1998
FERNANDO VARGAS *TKO 7* LUIS RAMON CAMPAS

Vargas, from Oxnard, California, had been a professional for less than 21 months when he faced grizzled warhorse Campas for the IBF junior middleweight title. At just 27 years old, Campas was already a veteran of 74 professional fights and was making his fourth world title defense. However, it was Vargas, with only 14 bouts under his belt, who did all the damage. The precocious young challenger teed off with an assortment of vicious power punches, forcing Campas to quit the fight after seven one-sided sessions.

APRIL 20, 2002
FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR. *UD 12* JOSE LUIS CASTILLO

Did "Pretty Boy" Floyd lose, or is it just wishful thinking on behalf of some of his detractors? The reality probably lies somewhere in the middle, but Mayweather's lightweight championship debut was unquestionably the toughest test of his career. Castillo cut off the ring brilliantly, attacked the body and punished his man in clinches whenever he had a free hand. Mayweather had plenty of success himself, and rumors abound that he carried a shoulder injury into the bout. The Grand Rapids, Michigan, star won the direct rematch with room to spare.

FEB. 15, 2003
RAFAEL MARQUEZ *TKO 8* TIM AUSTIN

In his first world title bout, Marquez had a serious assignment against the talented and hard-hitting southpaw Austin, who was unbeaten in 26 fights. By the midway point, the IBF bantamweight champion had taken control and Marquez

was being admonished by legendary trainer Nacho Beristain. Suddenly the challenger exploded into action and sought the finish in a sensational eighth frame. Under fire, Austin responded with a huge left and looked to have turned the tables when Marquez landed a jarring one-two combination followed by a hook-straight right combo that put Austin through the ropes. He found his feet, but Marquez forced the finish.

SEPT. 10, 2005
ZAHIR RAHEEM
UD 12
ERIK MORALES

Everything was going so well for Morales. He'd eased the sting of a second loss to fierce rival Barrera by outslugging Manny Pacquiao in a sensational performance to reignite his career. The sky was the limit. Enter Raheem, a funky little technician from Philadelphia, who would upset the apple cart. "El Terrible" was picked off, outclassed and outmaneuvered over the course of 12 rounds, and a pro-Morales crowd was silenced. The former champ would lose three more times in succession – twice to Pacquiao and once to David Diaz – before temporarily retiring.

FEB. 28, 2009
JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
TKO 9
JUAN DIAZ

The styles of these fighters matched up brilliantly, as Diaz's volume-punching relentlessness was a perfect foil for the counterpunching precision of Marquez. This high-contact bout was contested on relatively even terms until Marquez began to solve the affable Texan just after the midway point. "Dinamita" gradually layered his offense, working the body over and over to set up brutal uppercuts. Diaz was down in the ninth and was finished off in spectacular fashion by the Ring Magazine lightweight champion.

Juan Manuel Marquez's hard-fought stoppage of Juan Diaz was The Ring's 2009 Fight of the Year.

SEPT. 13, 2013
FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.
MD 12
CANELO ALVAREZ

The only moment of drama in this fight came when ring announcer Jimmy Lennon Jr. announced that the official verdict was a majority decision. Mayweather appeared to have dominated most of the rounds with ease and turned in an exceptional performance. Just how bad was the 114-114 card submitted by C.J. Ross? She never judged a professional prizefight again. The victory saw Mayweather claim Canelo's Ring, WBA and WBC junior middleweight titles.

OCT. 12, 2013
TIMOTHY BRADLEY
SD 12
JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ

Ten months earlier, Marquez had capped a four-fight series with Pacquiao by knocking him out cold. Sixteen months earlier, Bradley had been deemed very fortunate to be a given a decision over Pacquiao, who seemed to have defeated him handily. But styles make fights. The speed and athleticism of Bradley, who was coming off his brutal Fight of the Year with Ruslan Provodnikov, gave Marquez hell for 12 rounds and the older fighter struggled to keep up. If anything, the decision should have been unanimous, and the Palm Springs native defended his WBO welterweight title in style.

Dynamite Dozen: Kid Azteca vs. Fritzie Zivic, Enrique Bolanos vs. Ike Williams, Carlos Zarate vs. Alberto Davila, Lupe Pintor vs. Alberto Davila, Daniel Zaragoza vs. Tracy Harris Patterson, Juan Manuel Marquez vs. Freddie Norwood, Ricardo Lopez vs. Will Grigsby, Jose Luis Castillo vs. Stevie Johnston, Rafael Marquez vs. Mark Johnson, Fernando Montiel vs. Mark Johnson, Antonio Margarito vs. Paul Williams, Canelo Alvarez vs. Austin Trout

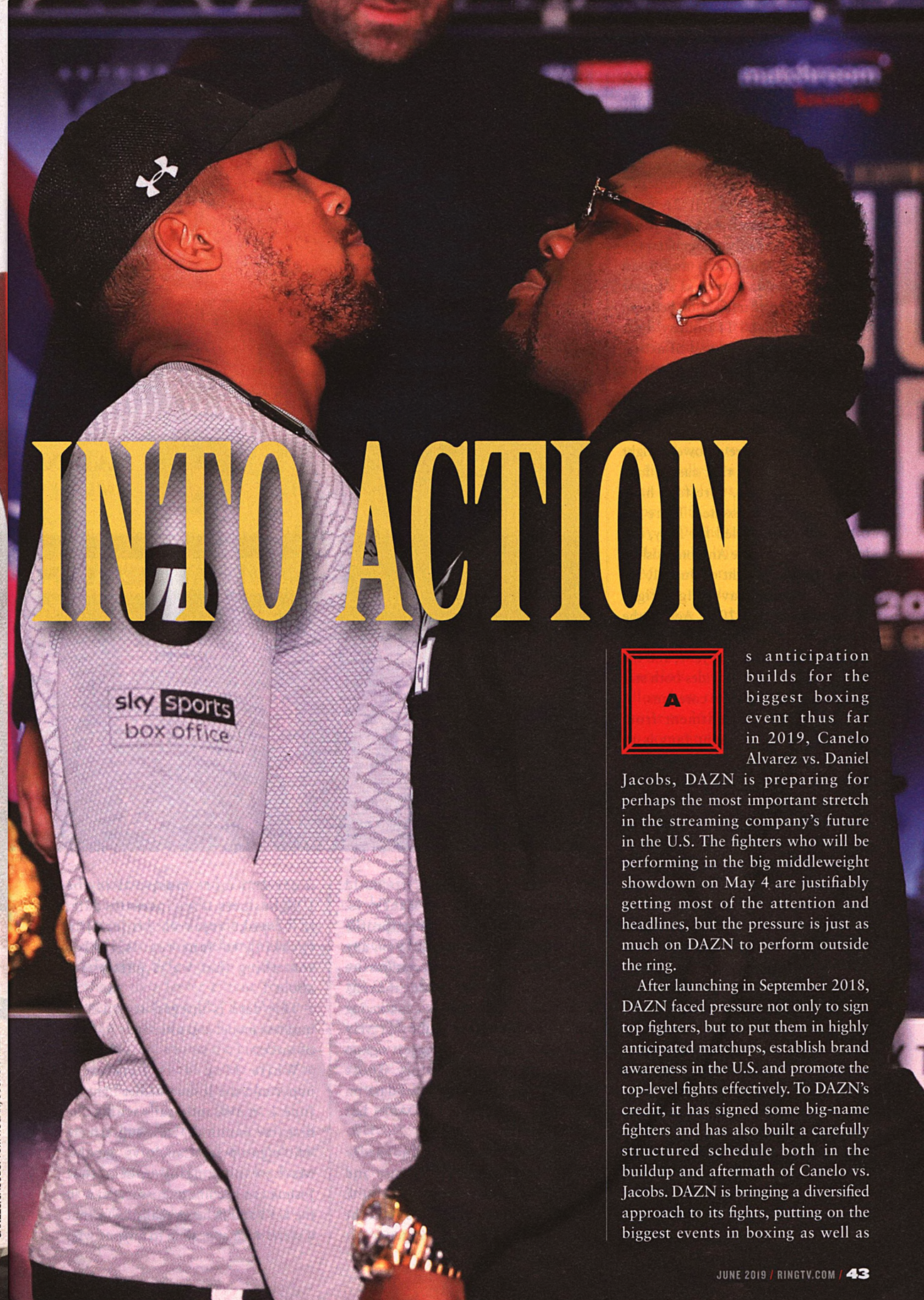
SPRINGING INTO ACTION

DAZN'S MAY 4 **CANELO-JACOBS** SHOWDOWN HIGHLIGHTS A CRUCIAL STRETCH OF SPRINGTIME PROGRAMMING AIMED AT NETTING U.S. SUBSCRIBERS

By **Evan Rutkowski**

The Canelo Alvarez-Daniel Jacobs showdown will come a month before Anthony Joshua faces Jarrell Miller – two big fights with major importance for DAZN's success.

CANELO/JACOBS: TOM HOGAN; JOSHUA/MILLER: RICHARD HEATHCOTE



As anticipation builds for the biggest boxing event thus far in 2019, Canelo Alvarez vs. Daniel Jacobs, DAZN is preparing for perhaps the most important stretch in the streaming company's future in the U.S. The fighters who will be performing in the big middleweight showdown on May 4 are justifiably getting most of the attention and headlines, but the pressure is just as much on DAZN to perform outside the ring.

After launching in September 2018, DAZN faced pressure not only to sign top fighters, but to put them in highly anticipated matchups, establish brand awareness in the U.S. and promote the top-level fights effectively. To DAZN's credit, it has signed some big-name fighters and has also built a carefully structured schedule both in the buildup and aftermath of Canelo vs. Jacobs. DAZN is bringing a diversified approach to its fights, putting on the biggest events in boxing as well as

more specialized fight cards aimed at turning the hardcore fans into happy subscribers.

Most agree that the appeal for core boxing fans – the sort of dedicated diehards who read The Ring magazine – starts with the April 26 card featuring a rematch between Ring/WBC junior bantamweight champion Srisaket Sor Rungvisai and Juan Francisco Estrada as well as a junior featherweight title unification between Danny Roman and TJ Doheny. That night kicks off a weekend of action that also includes the World Boxing Super Series semifinals featuring Regis Prograis vs. Kiryl Relikh and Zolani Tete vs. Nonito Donaire. While these fights are at lower weight classes with names that casual fans may not recognize, core fans have every reason to be excited. There are other fights scheduled for May, but looming largest is the Anthony Joshua vs. Jarrell Miller fight on June 1, the highest-profile heavyweight fight currently slated for 2019. Add in the signing of Gennady Golovkin for an anticipated fight later in June, and the upcoming schedule provides both star power and fights for the core fans.

"I think the commitment from our perspective to fight fans is to continue offering the best value schedule in boxing and making the big fights happen and delivering those fights to audiences as a flexible, affordable monthly price point," Joseph Markowski, DAZN's EVP of North America, told The Ring. "And there is a commitment from a commercial and financial perspective to continue that momentum and not rest on our laurels."

While DAZN executives seem confident and the schedule looks robust, make no mistake about it: This is DAZN's most critical stretch of time in the U.S. market. In order to establish its brand recognition and create the biggest fights, it's handed out hefty financial deals to sign Canelo, Jacobs, Golovkin and many other fighters. With the big money shelled out comes expectations for attaining subscriber numbers, and the next few months offer the best opportunity for DAZN to build its U.S. subscriber base. Canelo vs. Jacobs is clearly the highest-profile fight in the first half of 2019 on any boxing network, and expectations are high, both inside and outside the ring. DAZN execs are planning a marketing blitz, and there is no doubt that May 4 is expected to be the biggest signup day in the service's history. Those signups will bring important data on the customer, something DAZN has relied on in other markets.

"We're increasing our knowledge about the U.S. subscriber base and the U.S. market," Markowski said. "We also have operations in eight other markets which are generally older and more mature than the U.S. business... we invest in data, in bespoke research projects, in speaking to fans regularly. It's something that we're passionate about."

This data is integral to DAZN's business model and ultimately its level of success.

While May 4 is extremely important, the Joshua-Miller fight on June 1 significantly falls within the first free month for new subscribers who sign up for Canelo vs. Jacobs. Markowski remains upbeat that Joshua can become a crossover star in the U.S., and believes realistically that it starts with appealing to anyone who would sign up to watch Canelo.

"I think it might be a slightly different subset of boxing fans. The Canelo-Jacobs story definitely appeals to Hispanic fight fans in a way than perhaps to a lesser extent Joshua-Miller does," he said. "But Anthony Joshua is the heavyweight champ of the world and among the biggest stars in the sport. That's got to appeal to U.S. sports fans and boxing fans."

Expectations are that first-time subscribers will see real value in signing on for the long-term and that star fighters with different fan bases can gain new supporters.

While DAZN is a fledgling service in the U.S., it is an established company worldwide. The ability to leverage significant amounts of first-party data in determining customer preferences gives it an advantage, but gaining a foothold in the U.S. market remains a challenge for any new entity. DAZN doesn't have the brand-awareness level that a streaming service like ESPN+ enjoys, so it must court consumers with marketing campaigns touting the upcoming fights. It also must overcome the learning curve. Netflix and other streaming services have spent years conditioning fans of traditional comedies and dramas to stream their content on their platforms, but this is a relatively new concept for live sports.

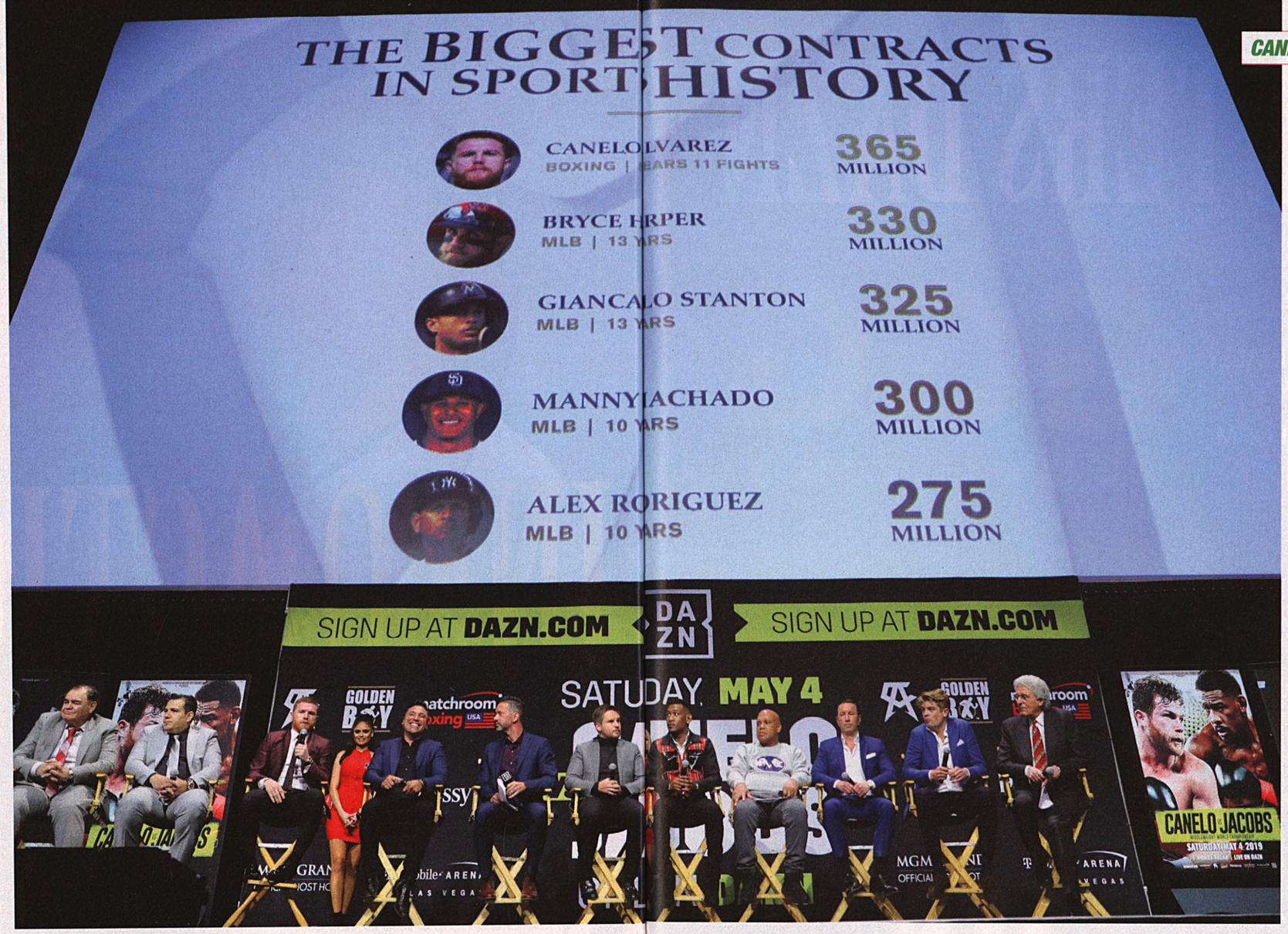
ESPN+ has leveraged several factors, including the ESPN brand, live UFC events, Italian Serie A soccer and Top Rank boxing to build its subscriber base to more than 2 million. DAZN, which has never publicly commented on its subscriber numbers, is relying much more heavily on boxing than ESPN+ and is counting on this upcoming series of fights rooted in what would traditionally be a major PPV matchup with Canelo vs. Jacobs. But what happens if Canelo loses to Jacobs on May 4? Do the fortunes of DAZN rise and fall with boxing's biggest star?

Markowski responds: "Then Danny Jacobs is the deserving middleweight champion of the world and we'll reassess. It's a 50/50 fight ... there were whispers in the industry that Canelo's deal with DAZN would allow him to pick opponents and cruise to 365 million bucks. There's no commitment on our side to that and there's no suggestion on the Canelo side that that's what they intend to do."

Canelo's history of big events and the other signings like Golovkin offer the potential for huge fights later in the year. If DAZN manages to offer them as part of its monthly subscription, it should make huge strides with consumers on brand recognition and substantially increase its subscriber base.

"The message is landing with fighters," Markowski said. "Our strategy, our commitment, our conversation with fighters and fans has remained consistent. We're just a few months later in the process, and people have realized we're here to stay and we're a serious player in the market."

Will the message land with consumers? The next few months are critical.



TOM HOGAN

CANELO ALVAREZ VS. DANIEL JACOBS

DAZN's record-setting partnership with Alvarez will pit the Mexican star against respected rivals, such as Jacobs, in PPV-worthy matchups.

GGG ENTERS DAZN

AFTER MONTHS OF SUSPENSE AND SPECULATION, GENNADY GOLOVKIN FINALLY ANNOUNCED A LUCRATIVE MULTI-FIGHT DEAL WITH BOXING'S NEWEST PLATFORM

By **Michael Montero**

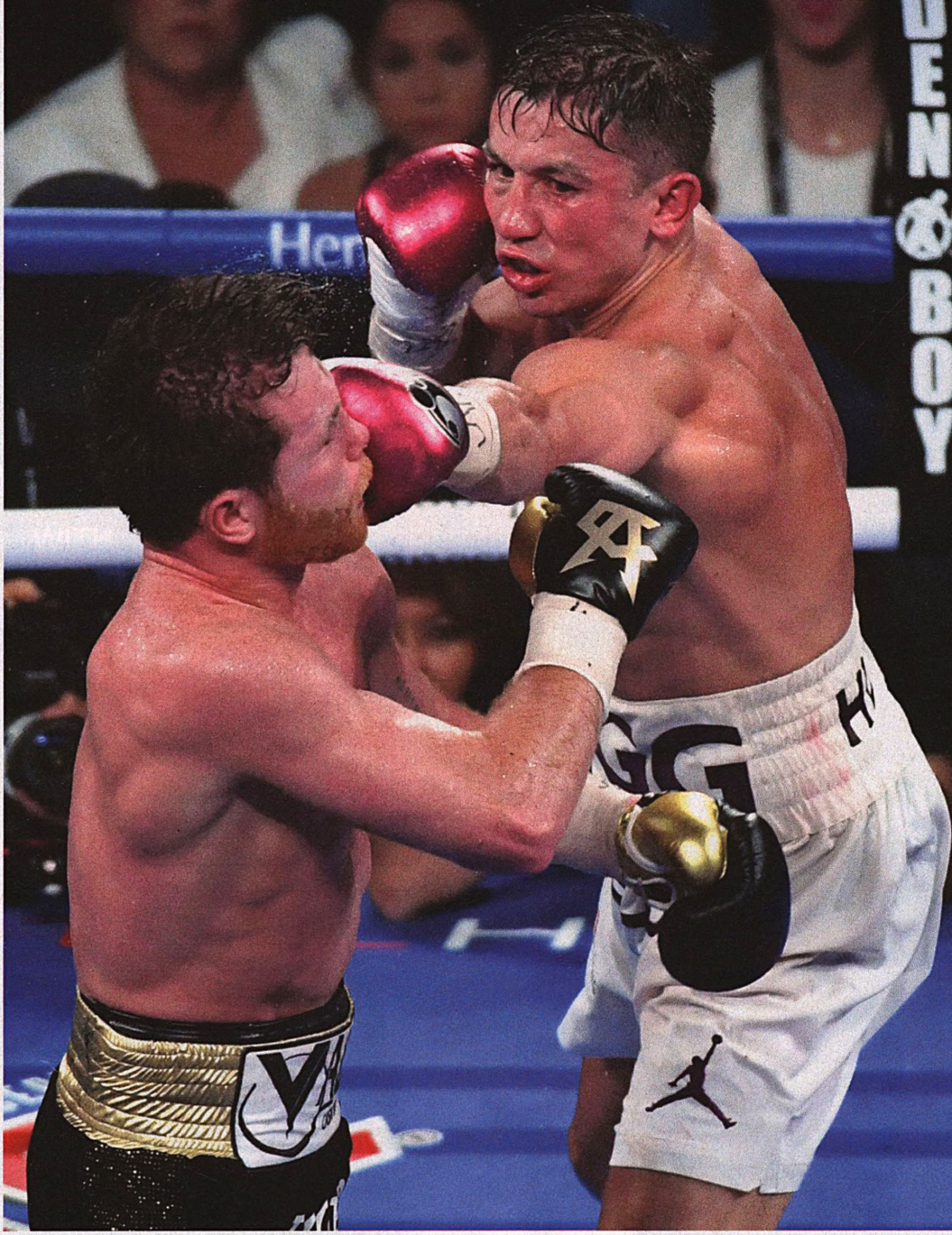
When HBO, the former undisputed champion of boxing programming, announced it was leaving the sport last September, it left Gennady "GGG" Golovkin without a network home. The Kazakhstani KO machine suddenly became one of the most sought-after free agents in all of boxing. Promoters everywhere began wooing one of the most proven brands in the sport. Al Haymon's Premier Boxing Champions (PBC) had a meeting with Golovkin, which could've set up a big fight with middleweight contender Jermall Charlo. Bob Arum's Top Rank made a bid, as did Eddie Hearn's Matchroom Boxing. Rumors swirled on social media that Golovkin was splitting with longtime promoter Tom Loeffler. But it was merely speculation.

Although GGG was intrigued by the exposure PBC could provide through their deal with the Fox network, it was known that newly founded streaming service DAZN offered the most lucrative potential bouts. Last fall, DAZN announced a record-breaking deal with Golden Boy Promotions and their key attraction, middleweight champion Saul "Canelo" Alvarez (51-1-2, 35 KOs). Earlier in the year, DAZN had reached an agreement with Matchroom, which promotes the current WBO middleweight titlist, Demetrius Andrade (27-0, 17 KOs). Still, rumors and speculation ran rampant in boxing circles.

In early March, all the rumors were finally put to rest as the deal between Golovkin and DAZN was officially announced at a presser in Los Angeles. The agreement called for two fights per year for three years, each with a guaranteed eight-figure payday. Further, Gennady's promotional outfit, GGG Promotions, will stage two cards (without him fighting) per year starting in 2020. Loeffler, the managing director of GGG Promotions, had

It took Gennady Golovkin some time to find a new broadcast partner, but the former unified middleweight champ appeared content at a Los Angeles press conference announcing his six-fight deal with DAZN.

AMANDA WESTCOTT



this to say to The Ring: "We look forward to our future with DAZN. Just like negotiations for the Canelo rematch, Gennady led negotiations here. He is a very shrewd businessman and he knew exactly what he wanted. He negotiated a very strong deal for himself."

Gennady will be 37 years old for his first bout with DAZN, tentatively scheduled for June against an opponent yet to be named, and 39 by the end of the agreement in late 2021. This seems to suggest that Golovkin will fight out the remainder of his professional career on DAZN and be set up to continue his promoting career thereafter.

So what happens between now and then?

Canelo Alvarez and Daniel Jacobs, two elite middleweights with whom GGG is quite familiar, are set to fight on May 4 at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. Should Canelo win and Golovkin win in June, it sets up a third showdown between them later this year. However, if the "Miracle Man" shocks the world and beats Alvarez, it sets up a desirable Golovkin-Jacobs rematch. Either way, DAZN wins, and so do fight fans. Consider that any of those potential matchups would've almost certainly been on pay-per-view if HBO was still in the business, probably costing fans $80 or more. Now fans will get to see those fights (and everything else on DAZN) for a $19.99 monthly subscription fee or $99.99 for an annual subscription..

Win, lose or draw against the Canelo-Jacobs winner later this year, a move to super middleweight in the near future is likely for Golovkin. DAZN, which announced it was picking up the American streaming rights to the World Boxing Super Series tournament last year, aired Callum Smith's seventh-round knockout of George Groves in the season one finale. Smith (25-0, 18 KOs) claimed the Ring and WBA 168-pound titles with that victory, making a potential Smith-Golovkin fight very attractive, especially in the U.K. Although Smith is not as experienced as Golovkin, he would pose a considerable physical challenge, standing five inches taller than GGG.

Dmitry Bivol (16-0, 11 KOs), the current WBA light heavyweight titleholder, scored a dominant points win over Joe Smith Jr. on DAZN in March. The Russian, who is No. 3 in The Ring's 175-pound rankings, says he plans to move down to super middleweight next. Bivol and Golovkin have similar pasts in that they were trained and raised in former Soviet countries, and both had stellar amateur records. Gennady reportedly compiled 345 wins (with only five losses) and Dmitry scored 268 victories (16 losses). A future match between them would be quite compelling. Age difference would be the key X-factor, as Bivol is more than

Golovkin's partnership with DAZN, which will include dates for GGG Promotions cards, sets up high-profile return bouts against either Canelo Alvarez or Daniel Jacobs – or both.

eight years younger than GGG.

There are other potential bouts with fighters represented by Golden Boy Promotions. At the top of that list is current WBO 154-pound beltholder Jaime Munguia (32-0, 26 KOs), The Ring's No. 2-rated junior middleweight. The 22-year-old Mexican is bursting at the seams at 154 pounds and should be moving up to middleweight soon. Golden Boy also represents currently undefeated middleweights Yamaguchi Falcao (16-0, 7 KOs), a Brazilian Olympic medalist, and Jason Quigley (15-0, 11 KOs), a former amateur standout from Ireland. At super middleweight, Golden Boy promotes American prospect D'Mitrius Ballard (20-0, 13 KOs) and Armenian-born Canadian Erik Bazinyan (22-0, 17 KOs). Any of those four could be an adequate "stay busy" type of opponent for Golovkin between more high-profile fights.

The abundance of future possibilities has boxing fans salivating and DAZN executives hopeful that it all carries over to subscription growth. And while their network home has changed, the structure of Team GGG remains the same. Loeffler continues to head the promotional company and Abel Sanchez continues to head Golovkin's training camp in Big Bear, California. One noticeable difference, though, isGennady taking a more active role on the business side of things. His demeanor has been more serious in recent press events, speaking mostly in Russian. "I think he feels that he can express himself better in Russian," said Loeffler. "After all, English is his fourth language. Instead of somebody twisting his words and confusing things, he can be precise in Russian."

This marked change symbolizes a new phase in Gennady Golovkin's career. It's clear now that he's thinking about life after fighting and that his deal with DAZN includes plans for that. His future in Canastota is already fairly certain, but his legacy as a fighter is still being written. Perhaps years from now his legacy and impact on the sport will be more than that of a fighter, but as a successful promoter as well. This next chapter of the GGG saga begins in June as he enters DAZN.

Michael Montero can be found on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram via @MonteroOnBoxing. His weekly show "The Neutral Corner" can be heard on iTunes, Spotify, and everywhere podcasts are found.

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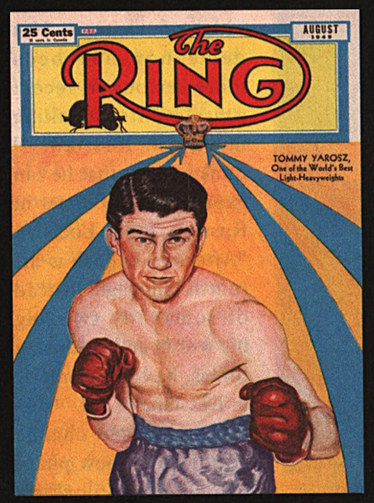
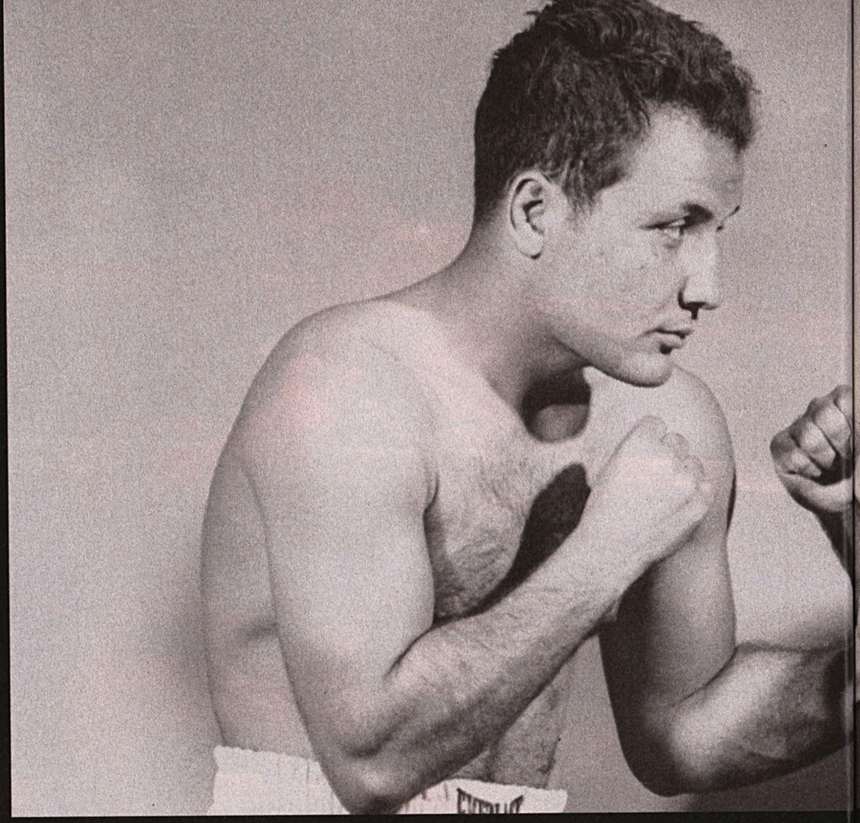
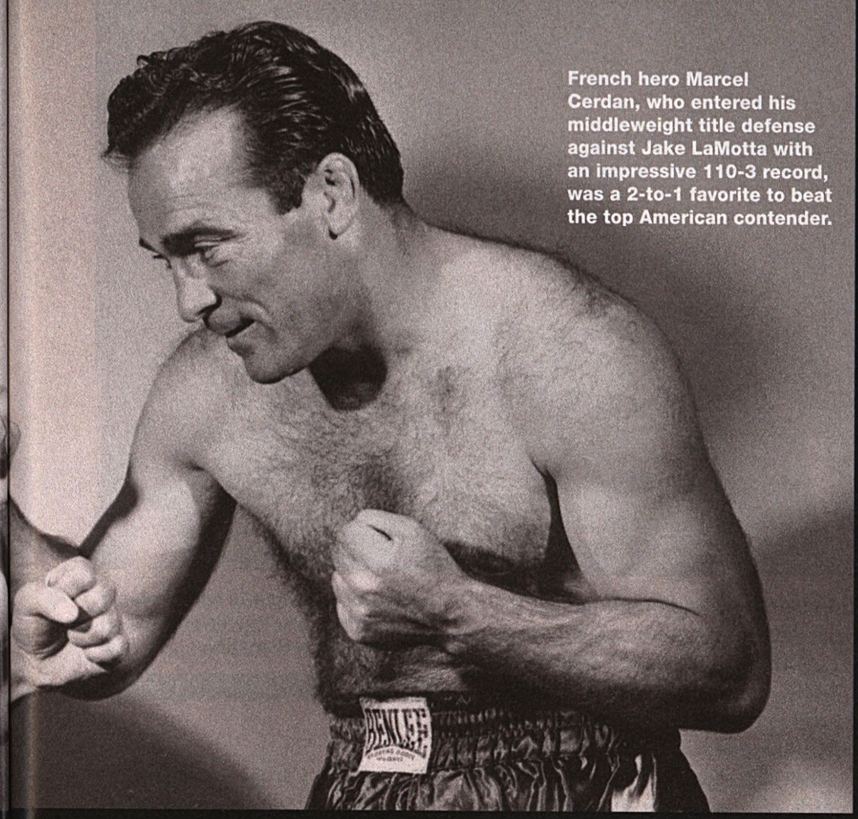
With Canelo-Jacobs fast approaching, The Ring reached into its archives for a fight report featuring another American hoping to win the middleweight championship. This article from the August 1949 issue is presented in its original form.



JAKE LAMOTTA, IN FORM REVERSAL, WINS WORLD MIDDLEWEIGHT CROWN – SHOULDER INJURY CAUSES MARCEL CERDAN TO QUIT IN TENTH ROUND – NEW CHAMPION'S LEFT HAND BADLY SWOLLEN – WINNER PUTS UP BEST FIGHT OF HIS CAREER TO GAIN GOAL OF HIS AMBITION

By **Nat Fleischer**





French hero Marcel Cerdan, who entered his middleweight title defense against Jake LaMotta with an impressive 110-3 record, was a 2-to-1 favorite to beat the top American contender.

AMERICA regained the world middleweight championship when Jake LaMotta, long a thorn in the side of the New York Boxing Commission, often referred to as the "bad boy" of pugilism, climaxed his nine-year career as a professional by handing Marcel Cerdan of France one of the worst beatings administered to a title holder in many years in scoring a knockout in the tenth round. The Frenchman was sitting in his corner unable to answer the bell, but had he not been stopped by his own seconds, he would have been sure prey for a full count and a continued battering had the bout not terminated as it did.

The New Yorker, who has been shunted aside on many occasions by the top men of his division, made an about face in fighting form once he got the shot at the title for which he had aimed over a stretch of years, and gave the greatest exhibition of his career. The 27-year-old gladiator, who had injured his left hand in the fight in the fifth round, was master of the situation almost from the opening gong. Cerdan, taking an unmerciful beating, wobbled to his corner at the end of the ninth round almost in a totter.

He obviously was sick at heart from the terrific body punishment he received and this, added to suffering from a severe injury to his left shoulder, spelled the end for him. Lou Burston, American representative of the defending champion, rushed to the opposite side of the ring and requested Dr. Cahalan to examine Marcel. The Michigan State medico refused to halt the bout. He declared that while Cerdan complained of severe pains and said he couldn't toss a left punch because of it, it required more than a superficial examination to find any injury. Whereupon Burston and Jo Longman, Cerdan's French manager, halted the affair as the bell rang for the tenth round, and a new world champion was crowned.

SINCE it was learned after the bout that LaMotta likewise had suffered an injury, at least in that respect it couldn't be said that the winner had a big advantage because of physical condition. It just wasn't a good evening for Cerdan, who was outfought in every department. In boxing and hitting power, Jake had it all over Marcel.

While the injury to Cerdan's left shoulder muscles was primarily responsible for the defeat of Cerdan, the mental edge gained by LaMotta the night before the battle, played a major part in the return of the title to America. Few in the assembly at Briggs Stadium were aware of the part that a determined challenger, chock-full of confidence, went into the ring so sure of himself that he wagered $5,000 on the outcome.

Prior to the original date set for the fight, Jake LaMotta's supporters were few compared to those of the French defender of the crown. But there was a rapid change when they learned that LaMotta, following a tirade against him by the American representative of Cerdan for his refusal to accept their demand that he weigh in the day following the postponement of the fight due to rain, an unusual procedure in boxing, suddenly made an about face and requested a second weigh-in on the morning of the day after the postponement. This action on his part, coming towards midnight, threw the Cerdan camp into panic.

AFTER crying all day for such procedure and even threatening to withdraw Cerdan from the fight if Jake refused to weigh in the next day, the representatives then pleaded to let well enough alone and forget the new weigh-in. They apparently saw a trick in Jake's turnabout.

To this LaMotta now objected, as did Nick Londes, whose first big promotion it was under the new International Boxing Club, and Jim Norris, president of their organization. LaMotta won out, and a new weigh-in time was arranged by Commissioner Floyd Stevens, much against his wishes, and this time Jake scaled one and a quarter pounds less than the 159½ of the previous day, while Cerdan gained the same weight, and now scaled 159¼, as against 158 in the original ceremonies.

Thus, the cry raised by Lou Burston on behalf of Cerdan that the Frenchman would rather withdraw from the fight than engage a light-heavyweight, made the American representative of Marcel look foolish. Jake proved to all that he was a true middleweight even after a day's postponement.

LaMotta's smart act in making an about face by requesting the very thing for which Burston, Joe Longman and Sam Richman had been fighting, now gave him the mental edge. It was much like the trick played by Bill Brady on Bob Fitzsimmons which had much to do in enabling Jim Jeffries to beat Ruby Robert.

This second weigh-in gave Jake the confidence he needed. He remarked to Jim Norris: "Now I know I'll take the title. I'll even stop him and I'm going to wager plenty on myself. I'll rush him out of the ring. They figured on throwing a scare into me by their actions at the commission offices and their cry of unfairness, but now I've tossed the scare into them. I know it."

And from what I observed, Jake did just that.

EVEN with Cerdan one hundred percent physically fit throughout the bout, he was doomed to defeat. While Cerdan's injury was more severe than that suffered by LaMotta, a badly swollen left hand is almost as much of a handicap as torn ligaments in the shoulder. On the basis of injuries, it was pretty much an even-stephen affair, but in severe punishment, in no middleweight title bout of recent years had a fighter tossed so many blows at an opponent as did LaMotta at Cerdan.

Cerdan declared he injured his shoulder with the first punch, but it wasn't until the fourth round that he failed to throw both lefts and rights. In fact, he won the second round by a wide margin through repeated use of rights and lefts. Several punishing left hooks to the face even jarred Jake, but that was the only round I gave to the Frenchman.

It also was the lone heat he was given by the referee, who called the third even as did I. The referee had Jake ahead on points, 51 to 39. My tally was the same. Judge Joe Lenahan called it two for Cerdan and one even. He gave LaMotta 49 points and Marcel 41 points. Judge Pete

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Miller gave two rounds to Cerdan and called two even. He had the new champion leading on points, 48 to 42.

IN the fourth round Jake threw 57 jabs to Cerdan's face and seven hooks, but in a late rally, Marcel connected with several powerful rights to his opponent's face, two of which had a jarring effect.

At times there was no letup in the action during the early rounds, but as the sessions continued, one could plainly see that there was something wrong with the champion as his punches lost their steam and became less and less effective. In one frame, Cerdan scarcely tossed a punch and LaMotta tired himself hooking, jabbing and landing right crosses.

In the ninth round I counted 104 blows that landed on the champion, despite the injury suffered by Jake.

I don't recall any title fight in which both contestants suffered injuries that eventually forced each to battle with only one hand. Each personified gameness by his showing. It was the kind of a fight I had predicted on the air in several broadcasts and it was most unfortunate that it had to terminate as it did.

LAMOTTA, whose poor performances in the Madison Square Garden arena had aroused resentment among fans and scribes alike, including myself, was a rejuvenated fighter in this title mill. That's why I selected him to win the crown.

I knew that he had waited many years for the chance to win the championship and that much of his trouble resulted from the run-around he had previously received from the top men of his division. Now his chance had come and he confided to those who interviewed him, as I did, that he had been waiting a long time for this opportunity and that he would not toss his chance away. He trained as he had never before and came into the ring a perfect athlete.

Condition plus the mental edge would have won him the title. In my opinion, he didn't need the help of Cerdan's injury and he'll keep the crown in America when he faces Cerdan in their return bout. Put that in your book for future reference.

Cerdan lands a right to LaMotta's chest during their grueling 1949 middleweight title battle.

CERDAN couldn't toss a left after the fourth round. He was unable to raise his left arm and this handicapped him. Yet it must be recorded that LaMotta, after the fifth, also had great difficulty firing his left because of his swollen hand. He used it but only to jab the face of the defending champion.

Cerdan said that he injured his arm when he was dropped to the canvas in the first round, but that seems improbable based on his splendid work in the second and third rounds, his best. It was after the third that he ceased firing lefts. Hence he must have hurt his arm in the second or third frame.

He complained to his seconds at the end of the second round that he found it difficult to raise his left arm although he tried to use it. For him to continue as he did, under a constant fire from LaMotta's right, was a credit to the Frenchman's courage. But it was an equally courageous stand that his opponent made considering the swollen condition of his hand as the scribes viewed it after the fight.

The contest was a rugged he-man battle, a brawl that found LaMotta at this best. Only occasionally did either give ground, despite their injuries. Each required special medical attention after the bout, and this was administered by Dr. Nardiello, Madison Square Garden's surgeon, who ordered Cerdan to fly back to New York the following morning for an X-ray examination.

FROM the very start of the bout, LaMotta became the aggressor and seldom did he give way to the defending champion. He switched from a body attack to a head attack and when he saw that Cerdan's defense for the face was nil, due to his inability to use his left, he played a tattoo such as he never before had attempted. Jake suddenly turned boxer, and when the fight was over, Cerdan's face was a mass of red blotches, the bridge of his nose was swollen and bleeding, and a cut under the left eye added to his discomfiture.

Coming back from Detroit to New York on the American Airlines plane, I asked him how come that he and his mentors say that he was hurt with the first punch he tossed, yet he took the next round easily and drew in the third, and did well in the fifth though he lost the round.

"I'm sure it happened then, because I felt pain in the second round and tried to use my left but found it difficult. In the succeeding rounds, I couldn't raise my arm," he answered through an interpreter.

Asked how he felt about the loss, he continued:

LaMotta (left) and Cerdan exchange blows in the ninth round. Cerdan would last one more round.

"It is the greatest disappointment in my career. I shall come back in August, fight LaMotta again for the title, and it may be my last fight. It will be a case of do or die, and I know I'll regain the crown."

LAMOTTA, the bulldog challenger, fought as he had predicted to me in his pre-bout plans. He rushed his opponent at the clang of the gong and never let up. In a mix-up in the opening round following an exchange, Cerdan was half pushed and wrestled and fell to the canvas, and it was a bewildered champion who went to his corner.

But he quickly recovered and throughout the second round he looked like the Cerdan who won THE RING's Fighter of the Year award in 1948. He tossed punches that landed with effectiveness and rocked Jake's head with rights that carried T.N.T. Two body blows, three to the chin and three right crosses to the head made it appear that LaMotta was in for a tough night and disappointment. But that was Cerdan's last great stand. From then to the finish he began to lose ground steadily. As he used his right repeatedly, the ringsiders wondered why he suddenly went right-hand crazy. They learned in due time.

THE full story of his injury was to come at the end of the ninth round when, battered as he never had been before, tired, dazed suffering with pain, he slowly walked to his corner a champion in distress, ready to toss in the sponge. The beating he took was similar to what he gave Zale when Marcel won the crown.

Each time that Jake landed on Marcel's mid-section and sides, there was a look of anguish on the face of the champion. He couldn't properly protect himself and he, moreso than the gathering of 22,183 persons who paid a gross of $159,726, realized it.

Jake went after his prey like a greyhound goes after the mechanical rabbit. There was no let-up. He pounded Marcel's body and face, and only his failure to strike with sufficient force to down his man kept Cerdan from being knocked out. But the punches were of a stinging variety.

After the fifth frame, LaMotta worked with precision. In fact, so well did he box and jab his opponent that in his dressing room where General Kilpatrick of the Madison Square Garden outfit and colonel Eddie Eagan, chairman of the New York Commission, went to congratulate him, Colonel Eagan remarked:

"Since when did you become a boxer, Jake?"

"Well, when I hurt my left I found I couldn't punch with it, but I could molest Cerdan by poking it in his face. Soon I saw I could do it easily, so I kept it up."

"That's what won the fight for you, Jake," replied Eagan, "and I hope you'll now realize that jabbing and boxing are just a part of the game and that you'll use them more often from now on."

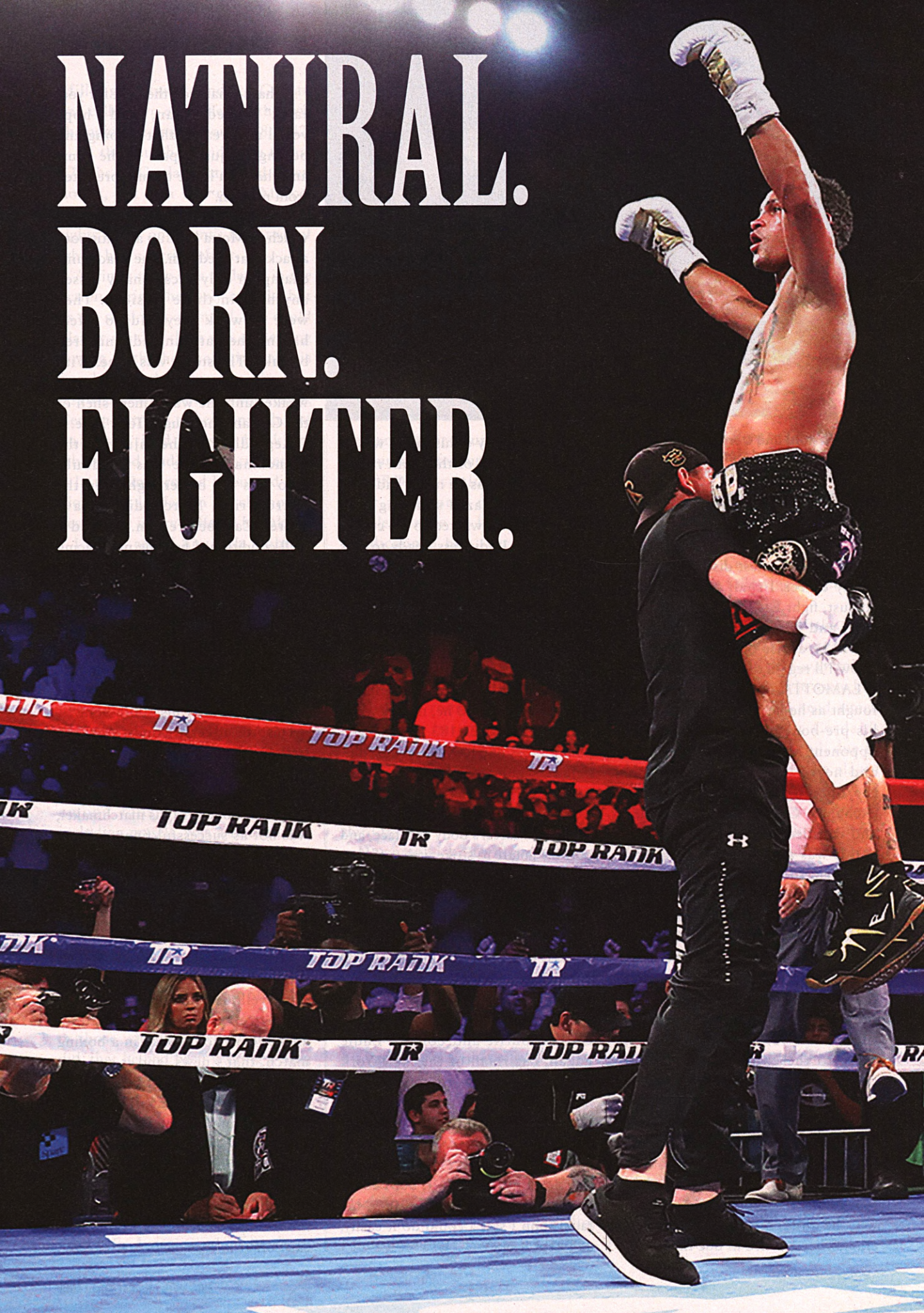
THE last three rounds were ones in which LaMotta kept up a continuous attack that tired him. The dead-game champion only occasionally tossed anything in those sessions. They were so weak they had no effect halting the battering administered by Jake. The steam was gone. With each passing minute Cerdan became weaker until he was a mere shell of the Cerdan who fought Tony Zale.

Regardless of the injury to the Frenchman, there was no doubt who was the better fighter in the Detroit ring. Marcel didn't have a tired Zale before him. He had a well-conditioned fighting man facing him, a bulldog who wanted to crown his career with a title he had been after for many years, a determined gladiator. For LaMotta, the bout was the crowning point of his ring career. For Cerdan, who won the world title in his 99th bout, it meant his exit as a title holder after his 100th bout.

Despite adverse conditions, the first title bout staged by the newly organized International Boxing Club, with Jim Norris as president and Nick Londes as his matchmaker, was not as successful financially as had been expected, but $159,726 is not to be sneezed at these trying days. At least the promotion made Detroit and the Mid-West boxing conscious again.

Londes' publicity purveyor, Francis Albertanti, loaned by the Garden, did a marvellous job. When Mid-West papers carry front page headlines almost daily for a week in a boxing match, that's news, and it signifies that the Norris-Wirtz-Louis-Garden combine will bring boxing back to normal in a few months.

[Editor's note: The rematch was set, but sadly it was not to be; Cerdan was killed in a plane crash just four months after he and LaMotta faced each other in Detroit.]


NATURAL.
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REGIS PROGRAIS AND BOXING TOOK A WHILE TO FIND EACH OTHER, BUT ONCE THEY DID, A BEAST WAS RELEASED

By **Michael Montero**

Growing up around New Orleans, one will likely hear legends of the Rougarou as a child. In Cajun lore, the Rougarou is a werewolf-like creature with a human body and a wolf's head that prowls the swamps, sugar cane fields and woodlands outside the city. In professional boxing, the Rougarou is an undefeated southpaw with scary power. Regis Prograis (23-0, 19 KOs) is the epitome of a natural-born fighter. Long before he entered the prizefighting ring as an adult, he was already a little too scary for his peers.

"When I was younger, I did karate and I got kicked out because I was too rough," Prograis told The Ring. "We would spar and I would hurt the kids. The sensei said, 'You need to go play football or do boxing, something more physical.'"

A few years later in high school, Prograis (pronounced "Pro-gray") was a member of the football team. And though he was undersized compared to many of his teammates, he made up for it with an innate physicality and tenacity. Those attributes would soon help him develop a reputation during his sophomore year at McDonogh 35 High School, where he was introduced to boxing in a most unconventional way. "The football players and basketball players, we would go in a classroom at lunchtime and fight," he said. "I knew it was going on for a while. One day, I walked past the classroom and heard people yelling. They had somebody watching the door so no teachers would see, because nobody was supposed to be in there. They told me I couldn't come in unless I fought, so I agreed to put on the gloves." Not only was the 16-year-old unafraid to fight, but he liked performing for the crowd as well. "It was like a real boxing match; we always had a crowd watching us. I was doing it every week and beating everybody."

Prograis was a natural at this makeshift lunch-period fight club, routinely having his way with older and bigger kids, and it wasn't just his classmates who took notice. His football coach also saw tremendous potential. "He pulled me aside and said, 'I really don't think you have a future in football, but you do in boxing,'" said Prograis. "It was literally the next day that I turned in my football equipment. I didn't have the passion for it. I became obsessed with boxing."

He began training at a local gym, learning the basics, and loved every minute of it. Problem was, he loved it so much that he began ignoring his homework. He had always been known as a class clown, but now his grades were beginning to dip. His mother pulled him out of the gym so he could focus on schoolwork. By the time summer break rolled around, Regis couldn't wait to get back to training. "As soon as summer hit, I was going to the gym every day," he said, "And then of course Hurricane Katrina hit that same summer."

In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina blew through the greater New Orleans region, leaving a trail of devastation in its path. The Category 5 storm would go on to cause more than $100 billion in damage and take more than 1,800 lives, making it the deadliest mainland United States hurricane since 1928. The Prograis family wisely heeded evacuation warnings from local authorities. Regis left New Orleans with his grandparents, a cousin and his younger sister. They drove to Houston while his mother stayed behind to look after things. Over the next nine months, they lived as nomads, staying with extended family, in hotel rooms – even the garages of family friends. Eventually they all moved back to Louisiana, but Regis wanted

Regis Prograis punishes Juan Jose Velasco with a straight left during their fight in "Rougarou's" native New Orleans.

to stay in Houston. The reason was simple: boxing. Soon after settling in "Space City" with his mother and enrolling back in high school, he found himself at the Savannah Boxing Club. Founded in 1980 by Willie and Clara Savannah, the gym is renowned in boxing circles for its successful amateur program and for building numerous titleholders in the pro ranks. Being surrounded by boxing greatness made a profound impact on young Prograis.

"At the time, Ronnie Shields was training there," he said. "Juan Diaz was at the top of his game and he was there. Rocky Juarez, Raul Marquez ... the names go on." Of all the fighters training at Savannah, former undisputed heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield had the greatest influence on Prograis. "I was in high school at the time, so I would go in on Saturdays and he would be there. I mean, one of the greatest fighters ever was training right next to me. The Charlos (twins Jermell and Jermall) were there too. They were real good friends of mine; we came up in high school together."

Unlike the Charlo brothers, Regis got a late start in boxing. He took his time developing in the amateurs for several years after the Charlos had already turned professional, eventually compiling a record of 87-7. Around 20 years old, while most of his friends were out partying and chasing women, Prograis' sole focus was boxing, and not only at the gym. He began reading every boxing book he could get his hands on, studying the history of the sport. "I saw a report that said most Americans spend over three hours a day watching TV, wasting time, so I cut it out of my life completely," he said. "I started reading like five or six hours a day. Even to this day, I read way more than I watch TV. When I get a real good book, I don't like to put it down; I just want to finish it. I highlight stuff, I write notes. I love to be a student of the game, to know my boxing history." Prograis explored the psychology of fighting, reading Sam Sheridan's *The Fighter's Mind* and *A Fighter's Heart*. He dug into self-help books like *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie, reading it numerous times.

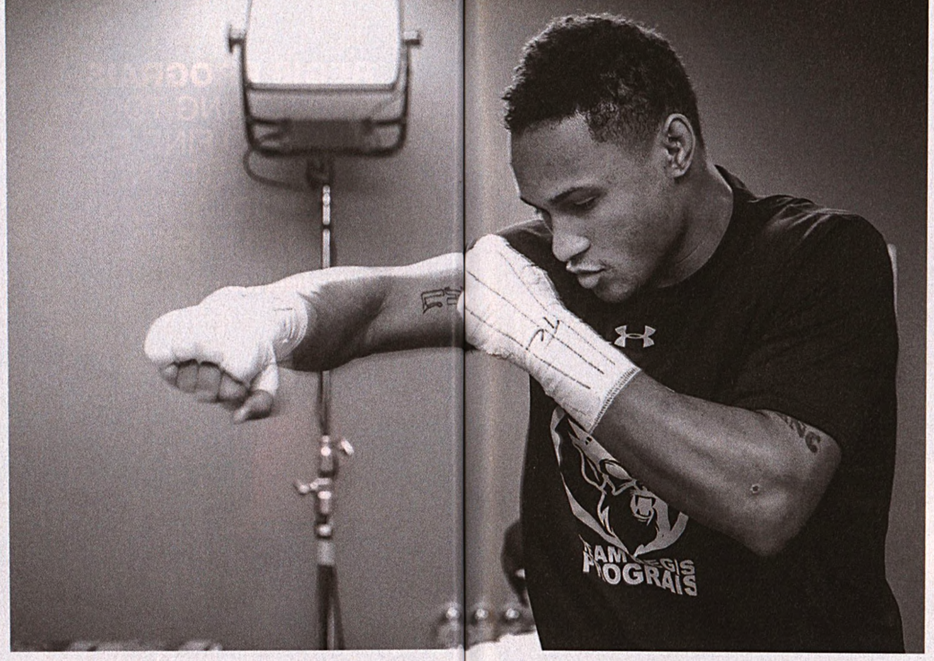
Prograis made it all the way to the semifinals at the 2011 United States Amateur Championships and competed in the 2012 Olympic Boxing Trials, where he lost to eventual welterweight pro Sammy Vasquez. During his amateur career, Prograis worked as a personal trainer at a local LA Fitness gym to pay the bills. It was through this job that he would meet his wife, Raquel. "I ended up training my (then future) wife's aunt and uncle," he said. "I started going to their house to train them at home and got real cool with them. One time, two of their nieces visited on vacation from Brazil, and that's how I met her." There was an immediate connection, but immediate obstacles as well. Beyond the fact that Raquel lived more than 4,000 miles away, there was a language barrier. "She didn't speak any English and I didn't speak any Portuguese," he laughed. At first, they would talk over the phone, using a translator to communicate. Sometimes they would speak through Raquel's aunt. Before long, Raquel was back in America and living with Regis, but she could only find work at a local restaurant for a meager wage. Times were tough and the couple was barely scraping by. But they persevered, and as their relationship developed, so did Regis' boxing career.

In April 2012, at the age of 23, Prograis made his pro debut in Houston. He got off to a blazing start, winning 12 of his first 14 bouts by knockout. It was during this time that his father came up with the "Rougarou" moniker, which Regis himself didn't really like at first. But in his 10th pro fight, he walked to the ring shirtless with a werewolf mask on and the crowd ate it up. From that point on, the name stuck and he enjoyed playing the role of a monster in the ring. Soon after turning pro, he married Raquel, they had their first of two children and he mastered the Portuguese language. His wife conquered English as well and even became a fight fan along the way. "She goes to all my fights now," he said. "Boxing has grown on her."

In August 2015, Prograis made his television debut on a ShoBox card. He would fight on the Showtime series three more times, culminating in a TKO 2 blowout win over former unified 140-pound titlist Julius Indongo in March 2018. When the World Boxing Super Series announced it was doing a junior welterweight tournament, Regis quickly jumped at the chance. He punched his ticket and was awarded the No. 1 seed after stopping previously undefeated Argentine Juan Jose Velasco in the main event of an ESPN card on July 14. It was the first time Prograis had fought in his hometown as a pro, and the community responded, rocking the University of New Orleans' Lakefront Arena.

At the WBSS draft, Prograis chose to face former lightweight titleholder Terry Flanagan in the opening quarterfinal round. They headlined a card on DAZN back at the Lakefront Arena in October. It was the biggest test of Prograis' career to date, and he passed with flying colors, dropping Flanagan in the eighth round on the way to scoring a wide points victory. Now the stage was set for a semifinal match against Kiryl Relikh (23-2, 19 KOs) of Belarus, but issues behind the scenes put the fight in jeopardy.

Promotional company Comosa AG, which owns the WBSS, had trouble securing all the necessary funding from tournament investors to go forward with the semifinal round of fights, originally slated for the first quarter of 2019. There were rumors of some fighters not receiving their victory bonuses from the quarterfinal round in a timely manner. Financial uncertainty and tournament delays had some fighters threatening to pull out, but Prograis says he never had such thoughts. "My management was telling me that they might not have the money, but I told them that I really want to stay in the tournament," he said. "I wanted to stay in it because my next fight (against Relikh) would be for the WBA title. For me, it's not about the money. I wanted to fight for the championship, and I feel that outside of the tournament I would not get that opportunity this quickly. I believe in the World Boxing Super Series and I really wanted to be in this tournament."



Prograis is set to challenge Kiryl Relikh for the WBA 140-pound title on April 27 in Lafayette, Louisiana.

MIKEY WILLIAMS

The finances were eventually secured, and the semifinal round of the WBSS is officially underway. Prograis will challenge Relikh for his title at the Cajun Dome in Lafayette, Louisiana, on April 27. The location makes good business sense; Lafayette is just a two-hour drive west from New Orleans and a three-hour drive east from Houston. The other semifinal bout of the 140-pound tourney is between Scotland's Josh Taylor (14-0, 12 KOs) and current IBF beltholder Ivan Baranchyk (19-0, 12 KOs), originally from Russia. Prograis says that he'd be more than willing to face either man, should he be successful against Relikh, but he prefers Olympian and fellow southpaw Taylor. "I would like to fight Taylor more, just because I see a lot of people out there saying he can beat me," he said. "I want to prove that I'm the best 140-pounder in the world. I don't want it to be debatable. I'm the number one seed right now, Taylor is number two. If the finale has to be in Scotland, that's OK, but I don't think I should have to fight him on his territory. And he shouldn't have to come to New Orleans. Let's do it in Las Vegas or New York, somewhere like that."

When asked about other top fighters in the junior welterweight division, Rougarou does not pull his punches. "You still got guys like (WBC titleholder) Jose Carlos Ramirez and (WBO titlist) Maurice Hooker out there, but they're not fighting top competition," he said. "I think the winner of the WBSS will be the best in the division. You can't hide behind your promoter, your manager, your network. Ramirez is ducking top fighters. Maybe it's not him, maybe it's his management, but they're ducking. Hooker, he's had a lot of heated words for me, and I've had words for him. Hopefully after the WBSS is over I can take his belt." A potential future clash between Prograis and Hooker (26-0-3, 17 KOs) would be an event in Texas, as "Mighty Mo" is from Dallas, a regional sports rival of Prograis' adopted Houston.

Prograis' immediate goal is simple: Unify all the titles at 140 pounds. "I never chase the names, I chase the titles," he said. "I want to do the same thing that Terence Crawford did at 140. In fact, I think I can do it even better than him, because we have better fighters at 140 right now than he did when he unified. All the (140-pound) champions right now are really good, but I feel that I'm at the top of the throne. I hope Hooker and Ramirez hold on to their belts, because I want to fight them. But guess what: If they lose the belt, I don't want to fight them. I'll fight the guys who beat them."

Opinionated and confident, it seems there is nothing the Rougarou cannot do. On top of boxing, reading, learning new languages, being a husband and father, he's squeezed in a little acting as well. Prograis had a small role in a 2018 feature film called *Bayou Caviar*, starring Cuba Gooding Jr. In January, he flew to Boston to work on a movie called *Wonderland*, starring Mark Wahlberg, due for release later this year. But he's not quite ready to hang up the gloves and move to Hollywood just yet. "Right now I don't think I want to be an actor," he said. "I really want to focus on boxing more than anything else."

Regis vows that he will be the only Prograis to ever focus on boxing. When asked about his son Ray (5) or his daughter Khalessi (2) possibly entering the ring, his response is clear. "I've bled and sweated just to have what my kids were born with," he said. "My son is only 5 years old, but he's been to four different countries already; he's always on vacation. My daughter is 2 years old and she's been outside of America three times already. Boxers start at the bottom and grind to get to the top. My kids are already at the top."

From fighting classmates at school during lunch break to fighting for a world title on DAZN, Regis Prograis is on his way to the top as well. Titleholders in the junior welterweight division be warned: The Rougarou is coming for you.

Michael Montero can be found on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram via @MonteroOnBoxing. His weekly podcast "The Neutral Corner" can be heard on iTunes, Spotify, and everywhere podcasts are found.

One of Eusebio Pedroza's most notable fights was his final title bout against Irish hero Barry McGuigan on June 8, 1985, in London.

MIRRORPIX

'FROM THE ASHES'

THE LATE **EUSEBIO PEDROZA** PROVED THAT A TRUE CHAMPION WILL ALWAYS RISE, NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES

By **Diego Morilla**

Remembering a boxing giant can spark memories that are wildly divergent, depending on the observer and the part of the fighter's career that he managed to observe. But in the case of Eusebio Pedroza, who passed away on March 1, the consensus is in: He was a bell-to-bell fighter, both in and out of the ring, a man who managed to put together one of the most spectacular reversals of fortune in boxing to rise to a Hall of Fame-worthy career.

"Pedroza was a great fighter, one of Panama's best ever," says Juan Carlos Tapia Jr., who succeeded his namesake father in the control of *Lo Mejor del Boxeo (The Best of Boxing)*, a boxing program popular in the country for decades. "Though he was hugely overshadowed by (Roberto) Duran, he was still very popular. One of the best featherweights of all time."

The comparison resonates with many of those who saw Pedroza fight. He left behind a shaky start to become so effective throughout his 19-year career that it took the presence of Duran, arguably the most captivating, polarizing and popular boxer ever to be born south of the Rio Grande, to eclipse him in the golden era of Panamanian boxing in the '70s and '80s.

"Pedroza rose from the ashes," expands Daniel Alonso, one of Panama's foremost boxing scribes and Tapia's broadcasting sidekick. "His 19 consecutive defenses of his title will be difficult to beat or even match."

By "ashes," he was referring to a trio of defeats that included a stoppage at the hands of Mexico's Alfonso Zamora in a bid for the WBA bantamweight belt in 1976. Pedroza earned a title shot against Spain's Cecilio Lastra two years later, but hopes were limited considering the challenger's dismaying record of 17-3 with all of his losses by knockout. But Pedroza made the most out of his experience and his home advantage, stopping Lastra and moving on to a spectacular seven-year streak that still remains the best-ever in one of boxing's most competitive divisions. He would never be stopped again during the rest of his career.

"To me, Pedroza is up there with Al Brown, Ismael Laguna and Roberto Duran," says Ricardo Cordoba, a former three-time title challenger. "He is a fighter that I admired a lot when I learned his story, about how he became champion and everything he achieved. Several times he came to the gym to give me tips and instructions on how to train, what to do during the fight, and those helped me a lot."

Cordoba further asserts Pedroza's place in history by highlighting some of the names in his list of victims, including other greats such as Ruben Olivares, Rocky Lockridge and Juan Laporte, as well as a slew of top contenders. "Truly, guys like these are admirable, because they were champions in an era when it was difficult to become a world champion because of the level of competition and lack of opportunities. Pedroza made it up there and held it 19 times, and that is very respectable. To me, Pedroza is and will be one of the very best champions Panama ever had."

After his globe-trotting run of defenses that included only six home title bouts (two against fellow Panamanians), Pedroza's illustrious reign finally came to a halt in 1985, when it took the best that Ireland's Barry McGuigan had to offer in a barnburner. Fourteen months later, Pedroza lost a split decision to Venezuelan Edgar Castro.

But true to his nature, Pedroza trudged onward. In the early '90s, he launched a comeback and won three times before a split-decision loss to Mexico's Mauro Gutierrez in 1992. And as the man responsible for that final defeat remembers, Pedroza fought every round with the intensity of the first.

"He was a wise boxer, very experienced," remembers Gutierrez. "He had retired and came back. He had a few fights before facing me, and I won only by split decision. That's how tough he was."

Gutierrez was in the trial horse period of his career when he faced Pedroza but remembers his opponent as a fighter who never rested on his laurels or underestimated the task at hand, even the challenge of facing a fringe contender with a 47-18-5 record.

"I was still young and I loved to mix it up, and he tried to box me, but he was much more experienced and fought intelligently to the very end. We talked after the fight, and he promised to keep fighting a few more years."

Pedroza surrendered his career only months later with a record of 41-6-1 (25 KOs), and pancreatic cancer finally tolled the final bell on him only a few hours shy of his 63rd birthday. But his yet-unparalleled achievements promise to live on for years to come, especially in a day when fighters are hardly given any chances of becoming legends after a 17-3 start.

"He suffered painful losses that led everyone to think his future in boxing was in doubt," said Alonso. "But thanks to his discipline, determination and will, he became one of the best featherweight champions ever."

A fitting summary of a career that will undoubtedly be appreciated more and more with the passing of time.

Bridgett Riley (right) is on the attack against Brenda Burnside during their six-round bout on March 13, 1999, at Madison Square Garden.

NOTHING LIKE THE REAL THING

BRIDGETT RILEY HAS FOUND SUCCESS AS A HOLLYWOOD STUNTWOMAN, BUT THE SOON-TO-BE HALL OF FAMER LEFT A PIECE OF HER HEART IN THE BOXING RING

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

There were no tanning beds or smoothie bars in the L.A. Boxing Club when Bridgett Riley was making her way through the world of professional boxing in the mid-'90s, and that was just fine with "Baby Doll."

"L.A. Boxing at that time was it," she said. "(Former world champion) Genaro (Hernandez), who trained there, was wonderful, and my whole team was from Mexico and everybody was a champion in all these different weight divisions. So I had incredible sparring. At one point, I was the only chick, the only white girl, everybody spoke Spanish, but it was the best. I couldn't wait to go to sleep at night to get up in the morning and be a part of that. I loved that part, that it was the pure love and desire to become a better fighter. I wanted to have the technique that they had, and when I had my headgear on and they thought that I was a dude in the ring, that was the best compliment I could get."

Riley, 45, laughs. She's 16 years removed from her last pro fight in 2003, and while her job as a stuntwoman has her constantly in fighting shape, there are no comebacks in the Florida resident's future despite the fact that she still might be able to beat a good number of current fighters.

The former IFBA bantamweight champion will head up the International Women's Boxing Hall of Fame's Class of 2019, which also includes Terri Cruz, Melissa Fiorentino, Lisa Holewyne, Carina Moreno, Wendy Rodriguez, Martha Salazar, David Avila, Stephen Blea, Blanca Gutierrez, Pat Emerick and Patricia Martinez-Pino. It's long-overdue recognition for a boxer who competed during women's boxing's first Golden Age in the '90s, that time when the talent level was high, the sport was starting to get mainstream attention and fighters got opportunities that are only beginning to come back for the ladies of the sweet science.

Of course, even then the money wasn't there for women's boxing, premium cable wasn't interested, and if there were sponsorships, they were few and far between. But Riley, a former kickboxer born in St. Louis, did wind up in the HBO Boxing video game, was promoted by Don King for a spell and competed in bouts televised

by ESPN.

One of those was her defining fight, a 1998 defense of her title against England's Aicha Lahsen, a bout that made The Ring's top 10 lists for best women's fight and knockout. Yet before Riley ended the fight in the ninth round, she had to survive a first-round knockdown that nearly removed the crown from her head.

"It was just a shock," she said. "I had never been down like that. I had been hurt in kickboxing, but sort of like a flash knockdown. I hadn't been down or hurt like that. And as a fighter, when you're in there, you go to another place. This fight barely started and I'm thinking I'm gonna lose my world title. And I knew it was live on ESPN, and I was like, 'Oh great, everybody's gonna see it. Awesome.' (laughs) I don't even remember getting up. It was completely black; I lost time. And when the bell rang, I didn't even know where my corner was."

The referee that night in Las Vegas was Richard Steele, and though it was eight years removed from Steele's controversial stoppage of the first Julio Cesar Chavez-Meldrick Taylor fight, the memory of that bout was in the mind of Riley's manager, Blinky Rodriguez, before his fighter entered the ring.

"She's a champion, she's tough," Rodriguez told Steele in the locker room before the fight. "Sometimes she's a slow starter, but she's tough and she can take a lot."

Steele let the fight enter the second round. Then the comeback began, and after wearing her foe down, Riley stopped Lahsen. A pair of wins over the criminally underrated Yvonne Trevino, and now this. Riley was 25 years old and on top of the world. Add in a successful side gig in Hollywood and a marketable image, and she was about to conquer a sport just getting its legs.

Less than five years later, it was all over. There was no headline-making drama, no finger-pointing; it was just boxing. Riley never got that defining superfight, and opportunities such as one with Magic Johnson Productions when the NBA great was considering a jump to boxing never panned out. And as the years went on, Riley knew that it was time for a change.

"It was one of the hardest decisions, and it was like taking a bullet," said Riley, who went 9-1 after the Lahsen fight and retired with a 15-3 (7 KOs) slate. "I totally understand why Sugar Ray Leonard and other great fighters come back. Your identity is completely tied up in that thing, and there's no feeling like it. Stunts are great, but nothing gives me what boxing gave me. So making that decision, it was a combination of everything."

That combination was mainly financial and physical. Not being with her longtime trainer also added to the former champion's decision to call it quits. Lily Rodriguez, the sister of kickboxing legend Benny "The Jet" Urquidez and a pioneering boxer and kickboxer in her own right, had guided Riley from the time she moved to California in 1994.

"I wasn't as tight with Lily and I was (working) with other people where it wasn't the same," she said. "The magic and the special thing I had with Lily was one of a kind, and when she died (in 2007), it was like losing a big piece of me. And I love (trainers) Freddie Roach and Justin Fortune, but it wasn't the same. And I already had some injuries, so I thought I better keep what's left of my brain cells after all of the concussions. I thought it was time. I also felt like I had to start taking care of myself financially more."

That meant more Hollywood and less boxing, and it was the best decision she could have made, as Riley has become an in-demand stunt double for the likes of Halle Berry, Eliza Dushku, Alyssa Milano, Rosie Perez and Scarlett Johansson while appearing in films such as Million Dollar Baby, Iron Man 2, The Hangover and The Scorpion King. At press time, Riley is working on Bad Boys for Life, and while she's satisfied with what she did in the ring, she also admits that she thinks about how her life would be different if she'd been born in a different era.

"A hundred percent, and sometimes it gets to me," she said. "I look at these women (fighting today) and I say I was born at the wrong time. But then I have to go, 'No,' because of my faith in God. God doesn't make mistakes, so I'm right where I'm supposed to be, and it wasn't meant for me to be here now doing that. God's opened up other doors, but at the same time, yeah, there's that part of me – because I'm always the fighter and I always have that mentality – that man, I would put it on them today. (laughs) I just feel that there have been so many moments where I've come so close to such big times throughout my career that sometimes I wonder if it was not meant for me to really go to that next level."

It's the unfortunate "what if" of all the top female fighters of Riley's era, but "Baby Doll" doesn't look back in anger. She had a good run, one that earned her a place in the Hall of Fame, and she can always take pride in the reality that she came from a time when fighters made their name in the gym and the ring, and not on social media.

"We worked hard in the gym, and that was the focus," said Riley. "There's a lot of shortcuts with all this Instagram, Facebook and social media. I compare it to all these singers coming up on 'The Voice' and 'American Idol.' These shows make it so easy. There's something to be said about paying your dues and going through this process of having to actually get out and chase this thing. I went to L.A. from St. Louis with a hundred bucks on me and I drove out there in my little Nissan. It didn't fall out of the sky and I didn't get to be on a reality TV show and, boom, all of a sudden I'm an overnight success. There's too much instant gratification out there, and all of this stuff is taking away the journey that is the School of Hard Knocks that gets you to that place when you're ready to step into that ring." RING

The 2019 International Women's Boxing Hall of Fame induction ceremony takes place at the DoubleTree Hotel in Brisbane, California on August 30.

Errol Spence Jr. proved to Mikey Garcia that skill matters just as much as size when elite boxers clash.

PHOTO BY TOM PENNINGTON

FIGHT ROUNDUP

RECENT ACTION AND FUTURE SIGNIFICANCE

BY BRIAN HARTY

ERROL SPENCE JR. UD 12 MIKEY GARCIA

March 16, AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas

You'll never see anyone who fits the expression "doesn't know how to lose" better than Mikey Garcia, and not just because of how he plowed his way to titles in four divisions. It's more straightforward than that. His mind is so unfamiliar with the idea of losing that he literally doesn't know the procedure when it's happening, like, for instance, that raising your fist victoriously after clearly losing a round – round after round – starts to look strange, especially when the time for swaying the judges has passed long ago. He wasn't alone in the beginning; a lot of armchair pugilists had also been sucked into the drama of two pound-for-pounders putting their undefeated records on the line – two-division disparity be damned – and the smaller Garcia had the hopes of many underdog-lovers behind him. His post-round psyching-up routine reassured them; a bit of early trouble was no cause for alarm. His formidable boxing skills, the equalizer, just needed time to warm up.

Errol Spence quickly reminded them, however, with zero regard for the "power of intention," that if wishes could shape reality, then the world would be infested with ponies and lottery winners. The excitement level for this welterweight superfight in the Dallas Cowboys' home stadium peaked with a pair of sensational walk-ins – a massive mariachi ensemble preceding Garcia, who was the visitor but had a large and loud contingent of fans supporting him, and a full marching band for the hometowner, Spence, both pushing through a crowd of 47,000 passionate

people underneath a Jumbotron the size of the *Close Encounters* mothership. After that, it was a steady descent into "What were we thinking?"

How appropriate that Spence's nickname is "The Truth." It was weird just watching these guys step into the ring knowing one of them was going to lose, but the truth is that it was never going to happen to Spence. In addition to being the true welterweight, while Garcia holds a title at lightweight and had never competed above 140 pounds, the Texan was simply the superior fighter.

Two things were immediately obvious: Spence was bigger, even when lowered by his wide stance, and his busy, far-reaching jab and southpaw stance were going to make it very difficult for Garcia to get inside. The Californian's best round was the second, when he did manage to follow his own jab with straight rights and pushed his way into Spence's personal space to land a left hook to the the body. But his search for a rhythm went nowhere. Spence was too smart and too unpredictable, morphing to absorb whatever Garcia tried and counterpunching the very notion of offense out of his head. Calmly, Spence took such control of the distance that comparing them weapon-wise it was the difference between a spear and a fondue fork, and there was little Garcia could do to traverse the minefield of heavy shots waiting for him if he lunged, even with his uncommon ability to intercept punches with his gloves. There were just too many and Spence was too accurate.

And counterpunches weren't the only danger. Past the fight's midpoint, when Garcia was already in knockout-or-nothing territory, Spence was bashing him with fewer jabs and more power punches of every variety. Garcia's trainer, his brother Robert, even asked him after the 10th if he wanted to continue. He did, of course, and weathered some ridiculous body shots in the 11th. But the only victories available to him at that point were to keep a KO off his record and to show Spence the first 12th round of his career, both of which – to his enormous credit – he did, and he never stopped trying to do the impossible. The scorecards offered no reward for that effort: 120-108, 120-108 and 120-107, every round for Spence, with judge Glenn Feldman scoring the penultimate round 10-8 even without a knockdown.

This was not a case of anyone being "exposed," and it's not like Garcia (39-1, 30 KOs) was a boxing interloper just looking for a payday; he's still one of the pound-for-pound best, and he did fine given the circumstances. Each man gave credit to the other in classy post-fight interviews. Spence (25-0, 21 KOs) was so polite, in fact, that when he called out Manny Pacquiao in the ring, it sounded more like he was asking for a prom date. Pacquiao

Garcia had difficulty finding his range for much of the fight.

Brian Castano's aggression and work rate enable him to hold Erislandy Lara to a draw.

responded like a kid who has been voted king at every dance he's ever been to – probably even a few he never attended. "Yeah, why not?" said the aloof senator. "We'll give the fans a good fight."

Spence vs. Garcia was not a good fight, but it was a great stab at one and a fantastic demonstration of Spence's sky-high potential. Our imaginations ran a little wild beforehand, sure, but that's fine, because we never would've seen one guy test his limits and another shine if we and Garcia weren't just a little delusional. Now we know.

ERISLANDY LARA D 12 BRIAN CASTANO

March 2, Barclays Center, Brooklyn, New York

Erislandy Lara's valiant effort in losing a split decision to Jarrett Hurd a year ago disavowed anyone of the belief that he was just "a Cuban boxer," which is code for skilled but boring. Back then, he pretty much had to plant his feet and fight the way he did because Hurd is so physically imposing that none of those slick, keep-away-and-counterpunch tactics were ever going to work on him. Against Brian Castano, who is 5½ inches shorter with a nine-inch deficit in reach compared to Hurd, it looked at first like Lara was going to unapologetically revert to a style designed to frustrate both his opponent and anyone watching, moving backward while waiting for Castano to overextend himself.

Castano was not going to make it that easy, however. In the tradition of fellow Argentines like Marcos Maidana and Lucas Matthysse, the "R" on his gearshift never gets used and he knows, as a very compact junior middleweight, that he needs to get inside to be effective. And while his hands might not be as heavy as his countrymen, they are quicker and his toolbox is deeper. With constant pressure and swarms of punches, he was indeed able to force his way past Lara's half-hearted but busy jab (he'd finish the fight having thrown more than 500 of them) and provoke some action.

But just as with Hurd, Lara showed that his Plan B is no joke. The 29-year-old Castano had the superior output and seemed to *want* it more, but Lara, 35, seemed to *see* more, waiting calmly inside his defensive shell taking minor hits before slipping in an almost invisible counterpunch that would do more damage than his opponent's entire flurry. The Argentine had the edge in the body-punching department, though, attacking from the sides with accurate hooks while Lara favored going up the middle. Castano landed other heavy shots by virtue of his volume, doubling the number of power punches from the more selective Lara, who tried to make every non-jab count. The

Cuban threw a career-high number of punches overall, but the majority were ineffective rangefinders.

It was entertaining and competitive enough to split the judges, with each fighter earning a score of 115-113. The third card was 114-114. So it was a letdown for Lara, who'd hoped to bounce back from the Hurd loss, but Castano proved himself to be a threat in the 154-pound division, especially to anyone with defense and punch-accuracy inferior to Lara's – which, lucky for him, is pretty much everyone.

SHAWN PORTER SD 12 YORDENIS UGAS

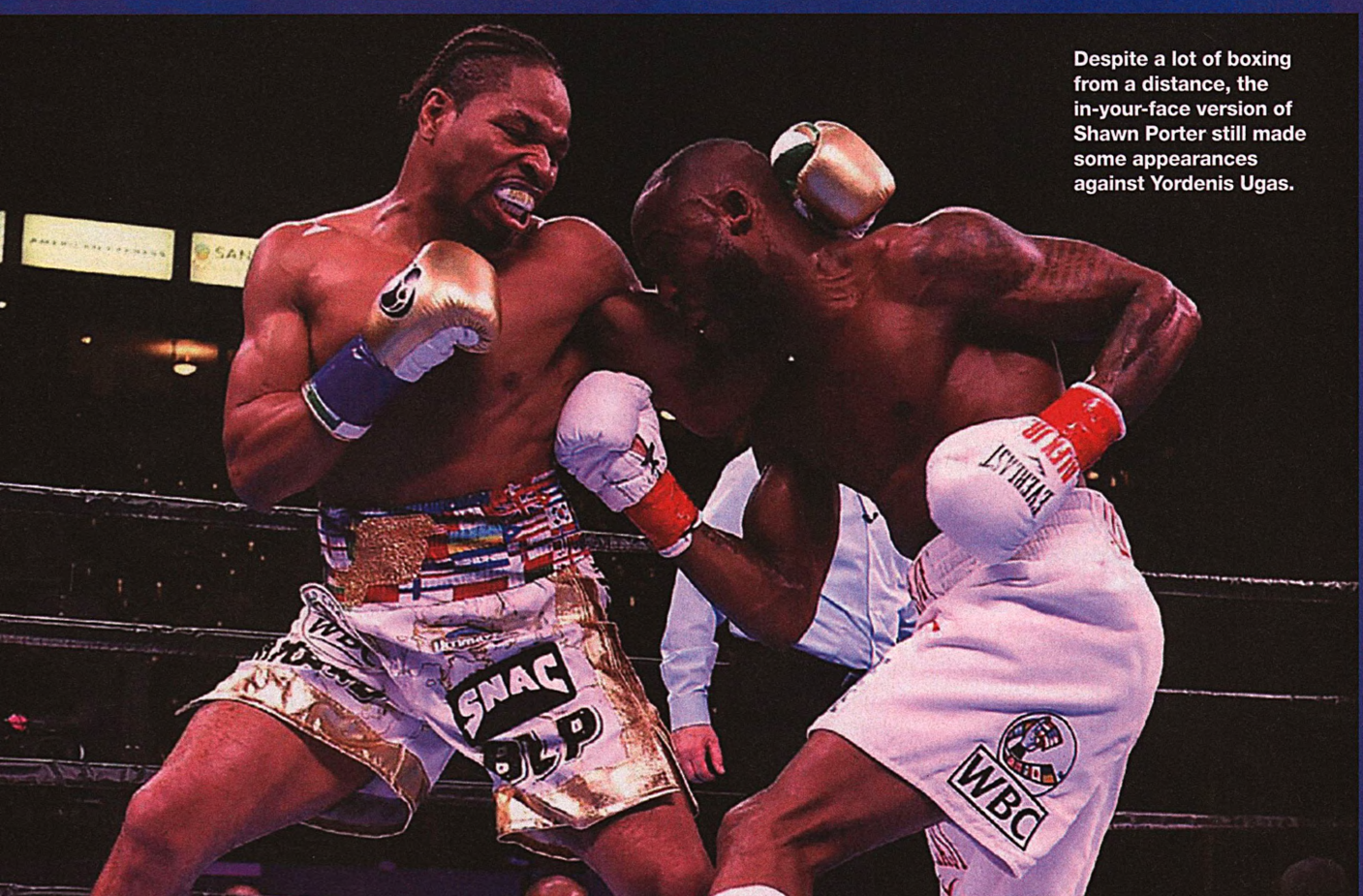
March 9, Dignity Health Sports Park, Carson, California

Against Danny Garcia last September, Shawn Porter showed a new side of himself, partially abandoning his berserker-style charges to experiment with distance, and it was great to have the space to finally get a look at his boxing skills. He continued the experiment while defending his WBC welterweight title against Yordenis Ugas, with mixed results.

Ugas is a little taller than Porter, but it was really the Cuban's timing and quick-strike counterpunches that made him seem so much rangier. So it was a little unusual that Porter again chose to box from the outside and jab so much, though he was the busier fighter in power punches as well. The distance made a bit more sense as Ugas rolled out his counterpunching prowess, punishing Porter with hard, accurate shots every time the American tried to jab his way into a range more suited to his high-energy attacks. Porter did get inside on a few occasions and chopped away with overhand rights and hooks to the body – whatever kind of punch it is, Porter swings it like an axe – but Ugas was fully fired-up after a few rounds, and his hands seemed to carry more weight as he tossed the titleholder around with his counter rights.

After a certain point, the fight became a sort of stalemate, with Ugas waiting and trying to lure Porter in so that he could counter and Porter understandably saying "no thanks" to that idea. And that seemed to be the plan laid out by "Showtime's" team. Of the two, he seemed to try more in the later rounds, but he caught hell from father/trainer Kenny in the corner after getting too aggressive in the 10th, during which chants for both fighters melded into "Porgas! Porgas!" It's difficult to even separate when each had their moments; a look at the official scorecards will show only two rounds in the entire fight – the fourth and the ninth – when all three judges agreed on a winner (Ugas the former, Porter the latter).

Regardless, the wide-ranging scores (115-113 and 116-112 for Porter, 117-111 for Ugas) produced a verdict that was very unpopular with a lot of people. Perhaps PBC overlord Al Haymon did broadcast himself into the judges' brain implants and instruct them to screw the lesser-known Ugas. Or maybe it was just a close fight. Both theories are plausible. Ugas is understandably



Despite a lot of boxing from a distance, the in-your-face version of Shawn Porter still made some appearances against Yordenis Ugas.

Joe Smith Jr. found it extremely difficult to either land clean punches or defend himself against Dmitry Bivol.

upset, though; he probably won't get a rematch with Porter (30-2-1, 17 KOs), who is surely more interested in the PBC welterweight mix that includes Keith Thurman, Manny Pacquiao and Errol Spence for monetary reasons – and also because he probably doesn't want to try dodging a bullet twice.

DMITRY BIVOL UD 12 JOE SMITH JR.

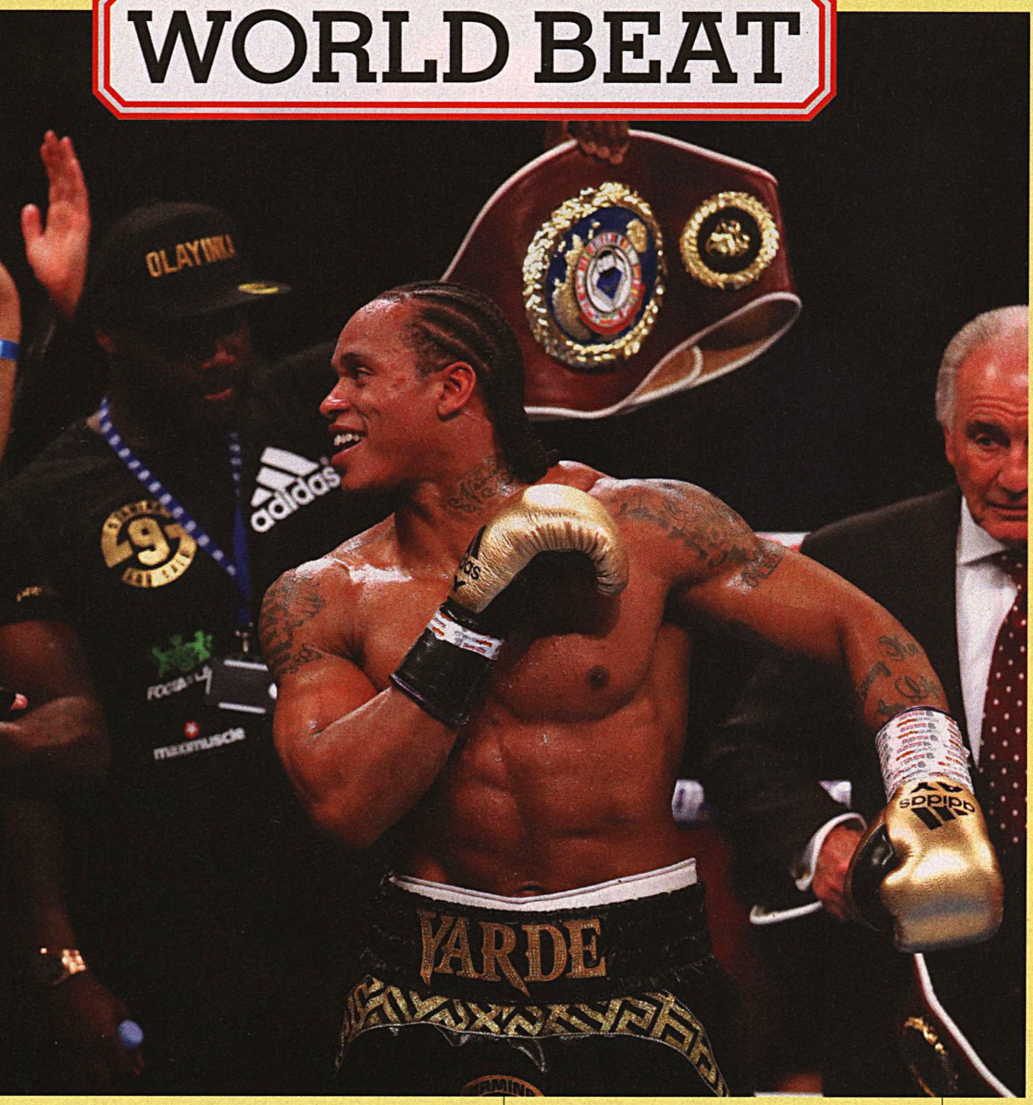
March 9, Turning Stone Resort & Casino, Verona, New York

Joe Smith Jr.'s place in boxing history is already set: He's the man who knocked Bernard Hopkins literally out of the ring and into retirement, thus ending one of the great careers of modern boxing and creating a clip that will be used forever in highlight montages. He's got a great story that totally fits with him walking to the ring accompanied by "Born in the U.S.A." From light heavyweight titleholder Dmitry Bivol he received a harsh message, though: I am the future, not you.

Smith should never be sold short, and he demonstrated why in the 10th round when he nailed Bivol at the bell with a looping right hand that had the Russian wobbling back to his corner with wandering eyes. But the effects carried over into the next two rounds, and an energized Smith couldn't hit his compromised foe cleanly for a full six minutes. Even with his brain scrambled, Bivol was impressive.

The rounds leading up to that big punch were equally instructive. Smith is a guy who looks like he could punch through drywall all day – he has wide shoulders and long, heavy arms, his left one fully sleeved in dark tattoos that set it apart from the rest of his body like a cybernetic cannon. We know he can box a bit and we know he hits hard, as he did in his first-round knockout of Andrzej Fonfara to set up the Hopkins fight. But Bivol, despite his less imposing physique and short pro career, is on another level. An exceptional former amateur, his tuned footwork and reflexes easily took him out of Smith's range when necessary and into position when he wanted to punch, for which he could select from a wide range of options, all of them accurate. Defensively he could slip or create deflective angles as needed. He didn't look like he was expending much energy at all as he banked rounds, and Smith struggled just to land one good punch, something which probably added to the frustration he was feeling when he picked Bivol up and body-slammed him in Round 9. Bivol, unperturbed, got up and carried on. To punctuate his performance, he abandoned boxing and put a 10-second beating on Smith until the final bell.

Bivol (16-0, 11 KOs) held onto his WBA title with scores of 119-109, 119-109 and 118-110, which is the norm in any of his fights that have required scorecards. He has yet to face one of the true elite 175-pounders, however, and even though he was able to deal with Smith after getting hurt, it's not clear yet if he'd be able to do the same against somebody like Sergey Kovalev. We might find out this year.



Anthony Yarde is the latest in a long line of British boxing standouts to fight at Royal Albert Hall in London.

ANTHONY YARDE AND THE HISTORY OF THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL

U.K.

BY GARETH A DAVIES

British light heavyweight Anthony Yarde thrived as the headline act in boxing's return to the Royal Albert Hall in London for just the second time in 20 years, and even though the fight against American Travis Reeves was a bit of a mismatch, the venue made up for it. Yarde earned himself a mandatory shot at WBO titleholder Sergey Kovalev by dint of a dominant fifth-round knockout ended by a flurry of clubbing right hands.

But this is a special place, with a special history of pugilism. Yarde has no shortage of stories of escaping gangs and knife crime on the mean streets of Hackney in his youth, but he had never been inside the hallowed hall. Renowned for nights of classical, rock and pop concerts, ballet and opera, it has been a home for some of boxing's finest with its luscious interior: an elliptical shape, the intimacy of the red velvet seats and a maximum of just 5,500 spectators.

Its first foray into boxing was on Dec. 12, 1918, pitching a British Empire team against the American Services. That night, the King's Trophy was won by "Bombardier" Billy Wells, the renowned heavyweight, who outpointed Joe Beckett over three rounds.

The sport gained a royal stamp of approval in 1921 when the Prince of Wales witnessed events ringside as "Mighty Atom" Jimmy Wilde, the 5-foot-2 flyweight champion from Merthyr Tydfil who is regarded by many as Britain's greatest ever pound-for-pound boxer, lost in the 17th round to Pete "Kid" Herman, who was almost 10 pounds heavier.

The late '20s and early '30s saw the venue grow in popularity – the Italian giant Primo Carnera fought there six times – and by the '50s it was popular with a group of leading British post-war promoters, including Jack Solomons (who called it "the coziest arena in the world"), and afterward Harry Levene, Mike Barrett and Mickey Duff. It has been used now by Frank Warren, who promotes Yarde. Over time, a succession of British greats have marked a moment there, including Howard Winstone, Sir Henry Cooper, John Conteh, Frank Bruno, Naseem Hamed, Joe Calzaghe, Lennox Lewis and Ricky Hatton. Lewis fought Glenn McCrory there in September 1991; Bruno made his debut at the Royal Albert Hall and fought there 15 times, winning every visit by knockout; Cooper fought there twice in the 1950s and had a brace of appearances in the '60s. And in May 1979, Muhammad Ali said farewell to London in an exhibition bout entitled "The Magic of Ali."

It was a special night for Yarde.

★★★

VICTORY FOR CHRIS EUBANK JR. HERALDS RETIREMENT FOR JAMES DEGALE

Chris Eubank Jr. emerged from the overarching shadow of his father and widespread criticism of his boxing skills to produce the greatest performance of his career and bring out the retirement note from two-time super middleweight titleholder James DeGale. Eubank claimed no recognized title, but it was the manner of victory, dictating terms in a haphazard contest of clinches and head clashes while flooring DeGale twice with left hooks in the second and 10th rounds, that has projected the Brighton man toward major fights. Eubank – a winner by 114-111, 115-111 and 117-109 on the ringside judges' cards – said afterward: "I'm back where I need to be, at the top of the food chain, and now I'm coming for all the other belts in the super middleweight division."

DeGale, the first British boxer to win both Olympic gold and a professional world title, called time on his career five days later, 10 years to the day that the Harlesden man, then the Beijing Games Olympic middleweight champion, made his professional debut. It was time. The dancing feet, the snap of his southpaw jab, the ease, command and movement in the ring have slipped away from him. There were some extremely memorable nights in a career of 25 victories, three defeats and one draw, including in the USA, where DeGale beat Andre Dirrell and then took part in a thunderous unification fight with Badou Jack, which ended in a draw. DeGale ranks alongside Groves – who had retired less than three weeks before – as one of the leading modern British 168-pound fighters, and in a top 10 that contains Joe Calzaghe, Carl Froch, Nigel Benn, Chris Eubank, Richie Woodhall, Robin Reid and the current No. 1, Ring champion Callum Smith.

★★★

Anthony Ogogo, the London 2012 Olympics bronze medalist, also retired, leaving with a record of 11-1 as a professional middleweight after a series of operations on a shattered eye socket. "Accepting the end gracefully is part of being a professional athlete. Calling an end to dreams that are left unfulfilled is the hardest part," said the fighter from Lowestoft, Suffolk, now 30 years of age. But in keeping with his character, his aim is to "get better rather than bitter."

In a short career "filled with hurt, pain and frustration," Ogogo was injured for a combined period of six years and four months. In addition to the eye injuries, he endured three shoulder dislocations, broken bones and damaged ligaments and tendons. Seventeen operations and intensive rehabilitation typified that period of time.

Richard Schaefer signed Ogogo as a professional for Oscar De La Hoya, and I recall Richard reaching out for an opinion about Anthony. I can recall saying that he would most likely go on to be a famous British boxer, as he was marketable, had the looks of a model and was extremely likable. He could fight a bit, too ...

"I am and will always be a fighter to the core," said Ogogo. "In the amateurs, I overturned a never-been-done-before deficit with one arm, beating the Georgian to qualify for the Olympics. In 2012, I beat the world No. 1, a Ukrainian that nobody gave me a chance against. I did it with a patched-up shoulder, ravaged Achilles, a broken rib and, worst of all, my mum was in a coma and I didn't ever think I'd see her alive again. In the pros, I was back to fighting with only one arm again. One time in Germany, I had to put

James DeGale (right), the first British boxer to win an Olympic gold medal and a pro world title, retired after losing to Chris Eubank Jr.

RICHARD HEATHCOTE

it back in the socket using my own knee between rounds. Finally, my last-ever fight, I tried to box on for eight rounds, even though my eye socket was shattered and I was 78 percent visually impaired." Ogogo never gave in. Ever.

I worked with Anthony in studio on radio and on television and have interviewed him many times for The Telegraph. This was the attitude he always showed. "I've always said boxing is a snapshot of life; boxing has taught me many things in life. Like life, boxing isn't fair." Now, though, he will "bite down on the metaphorical gum shield."

"I'm biting down hard and I'm pushing on forwards to carve something out for myself. I've been through a lot in my career. I've had 17 operations and suffered every pain imaginable," he explained. "I've won, lost, cried and hurt. But if you were to ask me would I do it again? In a heartbeat. I love this game." Top man, top words, champion's attitude.

Gareth A Davies is Boxing Correspondent for The London Telegraph.

MEXICO

BY JORGE MILHE

Prospect Watch

The face of boxing currently belongs to a native of Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico: Canelo Alvarez. Are there other potential stars from Jalisco? What about Mexico City and Los Mochis, which have produced a dozen world champions over the decades?

Let's take a look at some promising Mexican up-and-comers that you may not be aware of – yet.

From Canelo's home region of Guadalajara, we have Gabriel Gollaz Valenzuela (16-2-1, 9 KOs), an elusive, fast, and charismatic junior welterweight who is part of Eddy Reynoso's Clase y Talento promotional stable. Valenzuela, 24, caught the eye of the WBC's Trainer of the Year, who observed a young boxer with fine skills and intelligence.

Also from Guadalajara (and Valenzuela's gym) is flyweight prospect Julio Cesar Martínez (14-1, 11 KOs), who goes by the ring moniker of "Rey," or King. (It's hard to be a boxer named Julio Cesar in Mexico and not want to be The King.) Martinez, who scored an impressive fifth-round body-shot stoppage of Ring-rated Andrew Selby on March 23 in Metepec, Mexico, is already ranked No. 2 by the WBC, and the brave and dynamic puncher has his sights set on newly crowned WBC beltholder Charlie Edwards of England.

"I'm ready to go to Wembley and shock the world this year," Martinez told The Ring.

Los Mochis, Sinaloa, is known as "the little town of big champions" in Mexico. Jorge Arce, Humberto Soto, Fernando Montiel, Hugo Ruiz, Hugo Cazares ... all notable world titleholders, all of them born and raised in Los Mochis. So if you are looking for new Mexican stars, you have to go where they're from.

Karim "Bullterrier" Arce (the nephew of former multi-division titleholder Jorge Arce) carries an unbeaten (15-0-1, 6 KOs) record along with his famous last name and

2012 Olympic bronze medalist Anthony Ogogo retired at age 30 after only 12 pro bouts due to a series of recurring injuries.

TOM JENKINS

talent. The 20-year-old bantamweight prospect, who recently outpointed faded-but-still-capable former 115-pound titleholder Alexander Munoz in an eight-round bout, is known for his dynamic combos and fierce fighting spirit.

Featherweight southpaw Eduardo "Zurdito" Ramirez (22-1-3, 9 KOs) is not afraid to go anywhere and fight anyone, as he proved in his one pro loss, a 12-round decision to former IBF titleholder Lee Selby in England, and his ninth-round stoppage of favored Bryan De Gracia (24-2-1, 20 KOs) in Brooklyn, New York. Ramirez can box and slug it out – it all depends on what his opponents bring to the ring. The 126-pound division is packed with awesome talent – including titleholders Leo Santa Cruz, Gary Russell Jr., Oscar Valdez and Josh Warrington – and Ramirez wants them all, so he never leaves the gym and he remains ready.

Jose Eduardo Nunez (13-1, 13 KOs), known as "El Sugar" in the ring, is a featherweight prospect who has caught the eye of former three-division titleholder Fernando "Cochulito" Montiel, who is in awe of the 21-year-old's boxing skills.

"Our 'Sugar' from Los Mochis is going to be in big fights very soon," Montiel told The Ring. "Remember his name. On my honor, I'm telling you that he is an awesome fighter."

Mexico City is home to the Romanza Gym and Hall of Fame trainer Nacho Beristain, the engineer of boxing legends. Beristain trained champions Gilberto Roman, Ricardo Lopez and Juan Manuel Marquez, plus Julio Cesar Chavez, Daniel Zaragoza and Humberto "Chiquita" Gonzalez all used to work out at Romanza. If Nacho says "This guy is good," chances are the fighter is more than good.

Beristain says junior middleweight prospect Hector Reyes (13-0, 10 KOs) has the "best boxing skills" of the 70 boxers, amateur and pro, currently training at his gym. Reyes is cerebral, tough and elegant, according to the Hall of Famer.

Not far behind the native of Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, is bantamweight Israel Picazo (15-4, 8 KOs) and flyweight Brian Mociño (whose last name is listed as "Mosinos" on Boxrec.com). Beristain describes Mociño (15-2, 3 KOs) as an "old-school fighter, very talented, works like a rookie – he can read his opponents' shots before they come."

Now you have the names and a few stories of some up-and-comers from the hotbeds of Mexican boxing. Keep your eye on them.

JAPAN

BY YURIKO MIYATA

On March 16, three-division titleholder Kosei Tanaka retained his WBO flyweight belt against former Ring Magazine junior flyweight champ Ryoichi Taguchi via unanimous decision in front of a hometown crowd at DeAi Dome in Gifu prefecture. The fight was hotly contested, but Tanaka, by scores of 119-109 and 117-111 (twice), was the clear winner.

Had the battle happened 15 months earlier as originally planned, the outcome could have been much different.

Tanaka (13-0, 7 KOs) and Taguchi (27-4-2, 12 KOs) were supposed to meet in a highly anticipated junior flyweight title unification bout on December 31, 2017. But the matchup fell apart because of an orbital bone fracture that Tanaka, who held the WBO 108-pound title, suffered in his previous fight. Taguchi, who held the WBA title, instead faced and beat IBF titleholder Milan Melindo to unify the belts and earn The Ring's vacant 108-pound championship on the date. But five months later, Taguchi gave up his titles to Hekkie Budler.

Four months after Taguchi's close decision loss, Tanaka moved up to flyweight and won the WBO title from brave slugger Sho Kimura in a 2018 Fight of the Year candidate. The victory brought Tanaka the honor of becoming a three-division world titleholder in his 12th professional fight, tying the speed record for achieving that

Ryoichi Taguchi lands an overhand right on Kosei Tanaka during their WBO flyweight title bout in Gifu, Japan.

South Africa's Kevin Lerena (right) restored confidence in his ailing shoulder with a fourth-round stoppage of Artur Mann.

JIJI PRESS

feat with pound-for-pound king Vasiliy Lomachenko. Despite that great accomplishment, Tanaka was motivated to face Taguchi.

The fight was named "The Fate," as they would finally meet in the ring.

Tanaka had wanted to fight Taguchi since he watched his rival's fight against Naoya Inoue from ringside in August 2013. Tanaka admired Taguchi's toughness, both physical and mental, in that decision loss.

"Our situations prevented us from fighting at junior flyweight, but my hope to fight him never changed," Tanaka said at a press conference in January. Taguchi was more motivated than Tanaka was. He turned 32 last December, and with no world title belt around his waist, thanks to Budler, thoughts of retirement came to mind. But he announced his comeback to the ring at flyweight, where Tanaka had staked his claim to being Japan's best, and the veteran opted to challenge the new WBO titleholder without first testing the waters at 112 pounds.

"I understand there are arguments both for and against this challenge in a new division without a tune-up, but I am simply grateful to the people who gave me this opportunity," said Taguchi. "Tanaka has improved a lot, obviously, and I know it's going to be a hard job to overcome him without improving my boxing in every way. I promise to make the fight exciting."

The former champ backed his words up, matching Tanaka's busy pace from the opening round. Early in the third, Taguchi landed a solid right that stumbled Tanaka. But Tanaka kept his composure and recaptured his rhythm, which quickly led to a slugfest. The champion controlled the action with brilliant combinations and quick in-and-out footwork. His lefts to the body cut down Taguchi's stamina, but the veteran challenger was still strong enough to change gears in the ninth round and land short punches in close, thanks to his ingenious defensive work. But Tanaka regained his momentum in the championship rounds and did his best to stop his admirable rival, who kept his dignity by fighting back despite being drained of energy.

"It was a great fight, thanks to Taguchi," Tanaka said after the fight. "I feel I got stronger with this fight. Is it another candidate for Fight of the Year?"

During the next-day press conference, which is a tradition of Japanese boxing, Team Tanaka told the press that he plans to keep defending his WBO flyweight belt this year but will keep an eye out for opportunities to challenge for a title in a fourth weight class. Tanaka is very smart in and out of the ring, prompting some to call him a "fighting philosopher." He is always looking to improve his fighting style, and he must have learned a lot from his tough fights against older rivals Kimura and Taguchi. Who can say how much more he can learn and achieve in boxing? He is just 23 years old.

Yuriko Miyata has covered the Japanese boxing scene for more than 20 years.

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

Part of being a professional athlete involves managing injuries. You avoid them as much as you can. But if they do happen, you walk the tightrope of knowing when to push through the pain, when to rest, how to work around it and when it is time for a major intervention. The last scenario unfolded for eighth-ranked cruiserweight contender Kevin Lerena after he won a workmanlike decision over Roman Golovashchenko in June 2018.

On closer examination, what was to be a routine operation on his right shoulder turned into major surgery. It was an unwelcome bump in the road for a career that had begun to gather momentum after he scored some solid wins over the likes of Micki Nielsen, Youri Kalenga and Dmytro Kucher.

The operation was a success, and upon completing a lengthy rehab process he stepped back in the ring at Emperor's Palace in Gauteng after nine months away. Standing across from him was 15-0 fringe contender Artur Mann. He didn't have the same experience as Lerena, but he was undefeated and hungry.

As is the case with all injuries, questions abounded: Will Lerena have the confidence to throw his right? Will the shoulder hold up? How will the layoff have affected him? Might he be better than ever?

Ultimately, only his performance in the ring would provide the answer.

The first round was a feeling-out session, with Lerena circling the ring and Mann stalking behind a high guard. The Kazakhstan-born German opened up every time Lerena paused, but most of the blows were blocked by Lerena's high guard. The mood was low-key until the local man landed a hard right to the body that got a reaction from the crowd.

The fight kicked off in the second stanza when both men decided to plant their feet and see what the other one had, prompting some good exchanges. Lerena landed a hard southpaw left and another one of his favorites, a straight left-right hook combo, to shade the round, although Mann kept himself live by landing a hard right of his own.

The third round saw Lerena settling into a rhythm, smoothly switching his attack between the body and head. Mann was determined and kept answering back, but it became clear that the momentum was shifting toward the hometown star.

When another straight left rocked Mann to his boots in the fourth round, the writing was on the wall. A follow-up combination punctuated by some stiff uppercuts deposited him on the canvas. He managed to beat the count, but Lerena was on him like a harbor shark, brought Mann's guard down with a series of body shots and nailed him with a vicious right hook-left hook combination that deposited him on the floor along the ropes. Mann showed heart in getting himself upright, but then he fell over again, clearly unable to continue.

It was an impressive performance by Lerena, made even more so by the circumstances preceding the fight. Initially nicknamed "The KO Kid" and renamed "Two Guns" when he stopped knocking his opponents out, as so often happens when the level of opposition increases, he seems to have suddenly rediscovered some power, which leads one to wonder how the injured shoulder may have affected his previous performances.

Although the 22-1 Lerena finds himself in the same situation as his stablemate, rising welterweight Thulani Mbenge – being in a division with a murderers' row at the very top – Aleksandr Usyk's move to heavyweight is sure to leave some belts lying around. Given the right opportunity, it is maybe not such a stretch to envision the popular contender claiming one for himself.

And one last thing: Given his latest performance and the fact that he is only 26, perhaps it is time to unretire that "KO Kid" moniker? RING

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The popularity of MMA in Canada increased dramatically due to Georges St-Pierre's success, and the man himself gained crossover fame. Here he is shown being honored for his career in a ceremony prior to the NHL game between the Montreal Canadiens and the Philadelphia Flyers at the Bell Centre in Montreal on February 21, 2019.

ENTER THE OCTAGON

BY GARETH A DAVIES

MMA LEGEND GEORGES ST-PIERRE ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

If there were a Mount Rushmore for MMA, the face of Canadian Georges St-Pierre would belong, carved there for eternity alongside the likes of Chuck Liddell, Randy Couture and Fedor Emelianenko. After debate, you might alter the rest of the cast slightly, swapping in Jon Jones or Anderson Silva, but from whatever angle you look at it, "Rush" – as he was known – would always have been there on the granite escarpment, a pound-for-pound great.

He wasn't the fastest, the biggest or the most powerful striker, but he was the most athletic, most versatile and gamest fighter with the smartest strategic plans you ever saw. St-Pierre always found a way – the material of great champions. He also carried himself brilliantly, with an undercurrent of martial arts respect in his soul.

In February, the UFC legend and former two-division champion announced his retirement from mixed martial arts at a news conference in Montreal. There had been talk of him facing Khabib Nurmagomedov, but the fight lost its legs.

St-Pierre is widely considered the greatest welterweight champion of all time; he still holds the record for nine defenses of the 170-pound title, which included victories over Nick Diaz, Carlos Condit, Jake Shields, B.J. Penn and Josh Koscheck. St-Pierre also avenged his only two defeats, to Matt Hughes and Matt Serra.

Moreover, in November 2017, returning to the sport after an absence of four years, St-Pierre captured the middleweight championship with a thrilling third-round submission win against incumbent Michael Bisping.

There was no clearer way of compounding his greatness. "It takes a lot of discipline to become and stay champion," said the 37-year-old, who left the sport with 26 victories. "It also takes a lot of discipline to stop while still feeling that you're in the best physical and mental shape of your life, but I've always planned to leave the sport when I'm at the top and in good health."

St-Pierre thanked all involved in his career, from the trainers to the fans to the former owners of the UFC – Lorenzo and Frank Fertitta – as well as its president, Dana White. His 13-year journey with the organization took him from UFC 46 to UFC 217.

To the last, though, it was respect that underpinned his era in the sport. "I want to thank each of my opponents. All of them are incredible athletes who brought out the best in me. I retire from competition with great pride at having had a positive impact on my sport. I intend to keep training and practicing martial arts for as long as I live, and I look forward to watching the new generation of champions carry our sport into the future."

"Georges has cemented his legacy as one of the pound-for-pound greatest fighters ever," reckoned Dana White. "He beat all the top guys during his welterweight title reign. He remains one of the best ambassadors for the sport. He put Canada on the MMA map."

That last comment could not have been more poignant. MMA in Canada really did have a worthy poster boy who raised the sport almost single-handedly from its infancy to sit alongside the other major franchises.

His connection with martial arts came early. He was born in the small municipality of Saint-Isidore, Quebec, and was frequently bullied at school. Yet he used this conflict as fuel to dedicate himself.

In 2011, St-Pierre set the largest UFC gate outside the U.S. at $12,075,000 when he headlined UFC 129 at Rogers Centre in Toronto. The event currently holds the second largest attendance in UFC history with 55,724 fans. I was reporting there that night live when he defeated Jake Shields, and the support St-Pierre had was truly staggering. The stadium fight was on a par with boxing's huge stadium nights featuring Manny Pacquiao in Dallas and Anthony Joshua in Cardiff and at Wembley Stadium.

There were so many accolades: He was named Sports Illustrated Fighter of the Year in 2009 and Rogers Sportsnet Canadian Athlete of the Year in 2008, 2009 and 2010. He was nominated for Best Fighter at the ESPY Awards in 2008, 2010,

2011 and 2018. Even outside the Octagon, St-Pierre appeared in two movies: Captain America: The Winter Soldier and Kickboxer: Vengeance. Needless to say, he earned tens of million of dollars inside and outside of the ring. Not bad for a kid who was bullied and worked for a time as a trash collector. What he touched, though, he turned to gold.

★ ★ ★

UFC LONDON MARRED BY POST-EVENT SCUFFLE BETWEEN JORGE MASVIDAL AND LEON EDWARDS

If it had happened in boxing, the media would have filled many a column inch and there would have been fierce debate on both radio and television. UFC London headliner Jorge Masvidal silenced a 16,000-strong crowd and won a legion of new fans in brutally knocking out Liverpudlian Darren Till in his homeland.

There was a classy post-fight interview, too. In the Octagon. But what Masvidal did afterward, leaving a behind-the-scenes post-fight interview to punch Leon Edwards – who had won the chief support event – over some smack talk, was wrong. Utterly wrong. Edwards had called the American out for a July fight, but in letting his hands go, Masvidal crossed the line.

The whole idea of combat sports is that it is settled by the rules. It's sport. Yes, these folks we admire are fighters – through and through – but altercations like this after two fighters trash-talk each other diminish the sport. Moreover, at the time of going to press, the UFC, whose ad hoc commission in London follows Nevada State Athletic Commission rules because there is not an official U.K. MMA commission, had opted not to punish the fighters. It is not the most serious happening we have ever witnessed, and yes, this does happen, and yes, fighters do lose their cool, but no punishment at all (the fight league's PR team was deemed to blame for letting the two men near each other) sets a bad precedent. The bottom line is that if this had happened in the U.S., Masvidal would be facing most likely a fine and/or a suspension.

Jorge Masvidal knocks out home favorite Darren Till in the second round during UFC Fight Night 147 at the O2 Arena in London on March 16.

GETTY IMAGES

There will be fans who see what happened as the norm, as part and parcel of the sport. We can fully understand that what Jorge did was resort to his street persona in the face of a perceived threat from Edwards and his team, but it called into question the gray line that exists between what is fight sports and what is assault.

★ ★ ★

CHAMP VS. CHAMP FIGHTS, AND DAZN BELLATOR WELTERWEIGHT TOURNAMENT GATHERING STEAM

Champion-vs.-champion fights have become all the rage in MMA. We witnessed Conor McGregor moving from featherweight to lightweight in defeating Jose Aldo and then eviscerating Eddie Alvarez in New York.

UFC flyweight king Henry Cejudo defeated T.J. Dillashaw (Dillashaw, the then-UFC bantamweight king, has since relinquished the title voluntarily after testing positive for a banned substance), and Amanda Nunes embossed herself as the greatest female fighter of all time in stopping Cyborg Santos in a thrilling 52-second blur of fists in Los Angeles last December.

In the Bellator fight league, welterweight titleholder Rory MacDonald stepped up to challenge Gegard Mousasi, the middleweight champ, last year. But Mousasi was too skilled, too big, and dominated the bout. Now, Patricio Pitbull, the featherweight king, moves up to challenge Bellator lightweight champion Michael Chandler in Missouri on May 11. Styles make fights, and we can expect fireworks. Just before that, as April draws to a close, MacDonald – still the reigning Bellator 170-pound champion – will face renowned wrestler/grappler Jon Fitch in San Jose in the last quarterfinal of the Bellator welterweight tournament that is being aired on burgeoning streaming giant DAZN. Douglas Lima, Michael "Venom" Page and Neiman Gracie have already progressed to the semifinal stage. The streaming service has a cracker of a grand prix on its hands.

NO CONTROVERSY

Almost four years after his sensational and controversial come-from-behind triumph over American star Meldrick Taylor, the great Julio Cesar Chavez lost for the first time after 90 fights to Frankie Randall. Upon regaining the WBC junior welterweight title from Randall amid controversial circumstances, a rejuvenated Chavez targeted the long-awaited Taylor rematch. This was a vastly different fight. The Mexican warrior enjoyed success early, and Taylor began to struggle badly by the midway point. A superb check hook decked the challenger in Round 8, and a strong follow-up assault forced referee Mills Lane to stop the contest. The bout took place on September 17, 1994, at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. RING

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COMING UP

The heavyweight division takes center stage at the Mecca of Boxing, Madison Square Garden, when Anthony Joshua defends his world titles against Jarrell Miller on June 1.

APRIL

APRIL 26 – Srisaket Sor Rungvisai vs. Juan Francisco Estrada, junior bantamweights (for Sor Rungvisai's Ring and WBC titles), Inglewood, Calif. (DAZN). Also, Daniel Roman vs. T.J. Doheny, junior featherweights (for Roman's WBA and Doheny's IBF titles).

APRIL 27 – Kiryl Relikh vs. Regis Prograis, junior welterweights (for Relikh's WBA title; WBSS semifinal), Lafayette, La. (DAZN). Also, Nonito Donaire vs. Zolani Tete, bantamweights (for Donaire's WBA and Tete's WBO titles; WBSS semifinal).

MAY

MAY 4 – Canelo Alvarez vs. Daniel Jacobs, middleweights (for Canelo's Ring, WBA and WBC titles, and Jacobs' IBF title), Las Vegas (DAZN).

MAY 4 – Artur Beterbiev vs. Radivoje Kalajdzic, light heavyweights (for Beterbiev's IBF title), Stockton, Calif. (ESPN). Also, Jerwin Ancajas vs. Ryuichi Funai, junior bantamweights (for Ancajas' IBF title).

MAY 11 – Miguel Berchelt vs. Francisco Vargas, junior lightweights (for Berchelt's WBC title), Tucson, Ariz. (ESPN).

MAY 11 – Jarrett Hurd vs. Julian Williams, junior middleweights (for Hurd's IBF and WBA titles), Fairfax, Va. (Fox).

MAY 13 – Moruti Mthalane vs. Masayuki Kuroda, flyweights (for Mthalane's IBF title), Tokyo.

MAY 18 – Emmanuel Rodriguez vs. Naoya Inoue, bantamweights (WBSS semifinal, for Rodriguez's IBF title), Glasgow, Scotland (DAZN). Also, Ivan Baranchyk vs. Josh Taylor, junior welterweights (for Baranchyk's IBF title).

MAY 18 – Deontay Wilder vs. Dominic Breazeale, heavyweights (for Wilder's WBC title), Brooklyn, N.Y. (Showtime).

JUNE

JUNE 1 – Anthony Joshua vs. Jarrell Miller, heavyweights (for Joshua's IBF, WBA and WBO titles), New York (DAZN).

JUNE 15 – Mairis Briedis vs. Krzysztof Glowacki, cruiserweights, Riga, Latvia (DAZN). Also, Yunier Dorticos vs. Andrew Tabiti, cruiserweights.

JUNE 15 – Josh Warrington vs. Kid Galahad, featherweights (for Warrington's IBF title), Leeds, U.K. (ESPN+, BT Sport).

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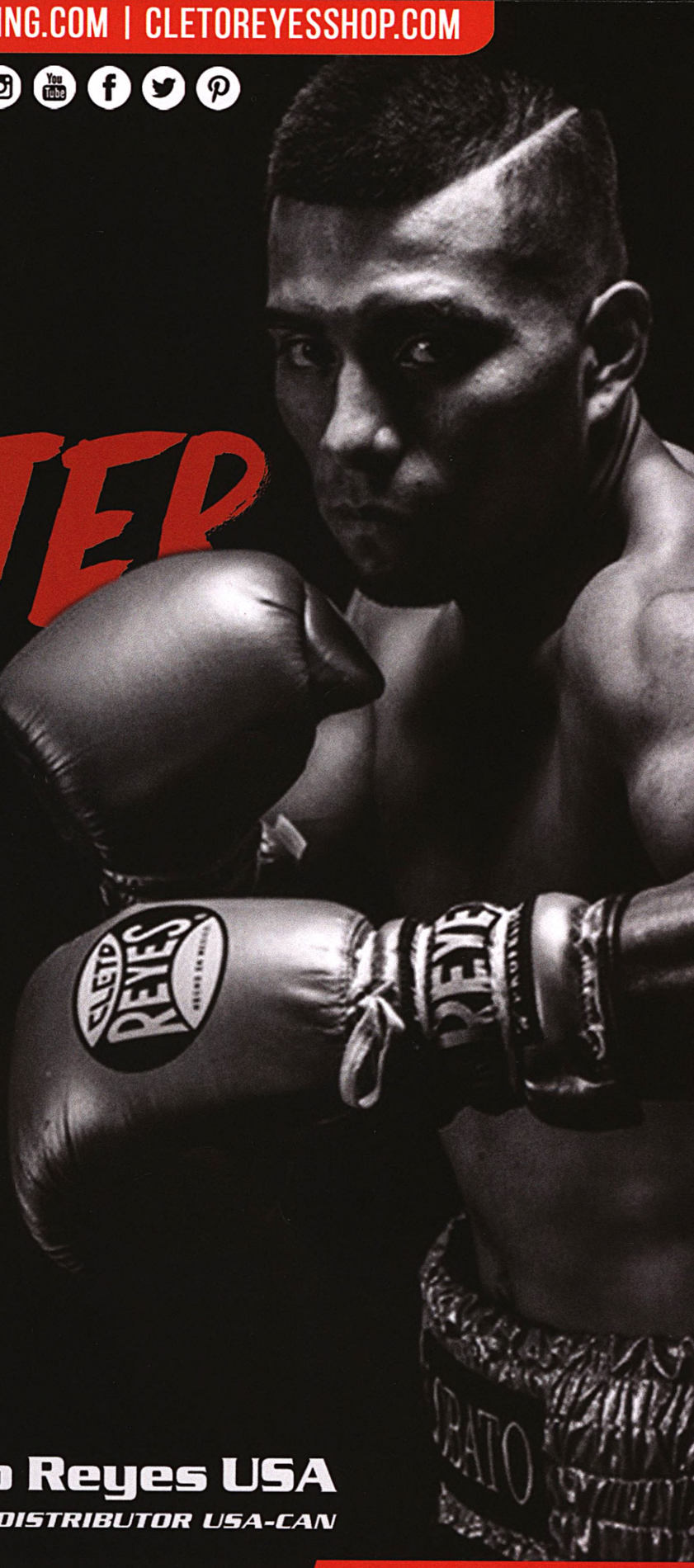
THIS IS WHAT A FIGHTER LOOKS LIKE



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